

THE RACE: Who's who in the AFC

DECEMBER 27, 1993 \$2.50/\$2.95 Can.

The Sporting News

SPORTSMEN OF THE YEAR

CITO GASTON

PAT GILICK



Plus: DAVE KINDRED,
the ROCKETS blast off,
M HASKINS goes for it
and much more

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December 27, 1993

COVER STORY:

The Blue Jay way

Pat Gillick and Cito Gaston, who proved that money alone can't buy back-to-back World Series championships, are TSN's Sportsmen of the Year for 1993.

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Dave Kindred

Leather gloves and wooden bats, once a dream gift, have been replaced by high-tech computer-simulated games. Worse yet, asking about Hopalong Cassidy gets only quizzical looks.

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Oilers are gushing

After winning their ninth consecutive game last Sunday, the Houston Oilers may be the first AFC team in years with a legitimate chance to win the Super Bowl. Paul Attner examines the best the AFC has to offer.

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Defining close

Since January 10, the Houston Rockets, led by center Hakeem Olajuwon, are 62-12, the best mark in the NBA. The reason the Rockets will continue to be one of the league's best teams is their defense.

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By somehow persuading recruits to play basketball in frigid Minneapolis, Clem Haskins has turned around the Minnesota basketball program and has the Gophers on the cusp of national recognition.

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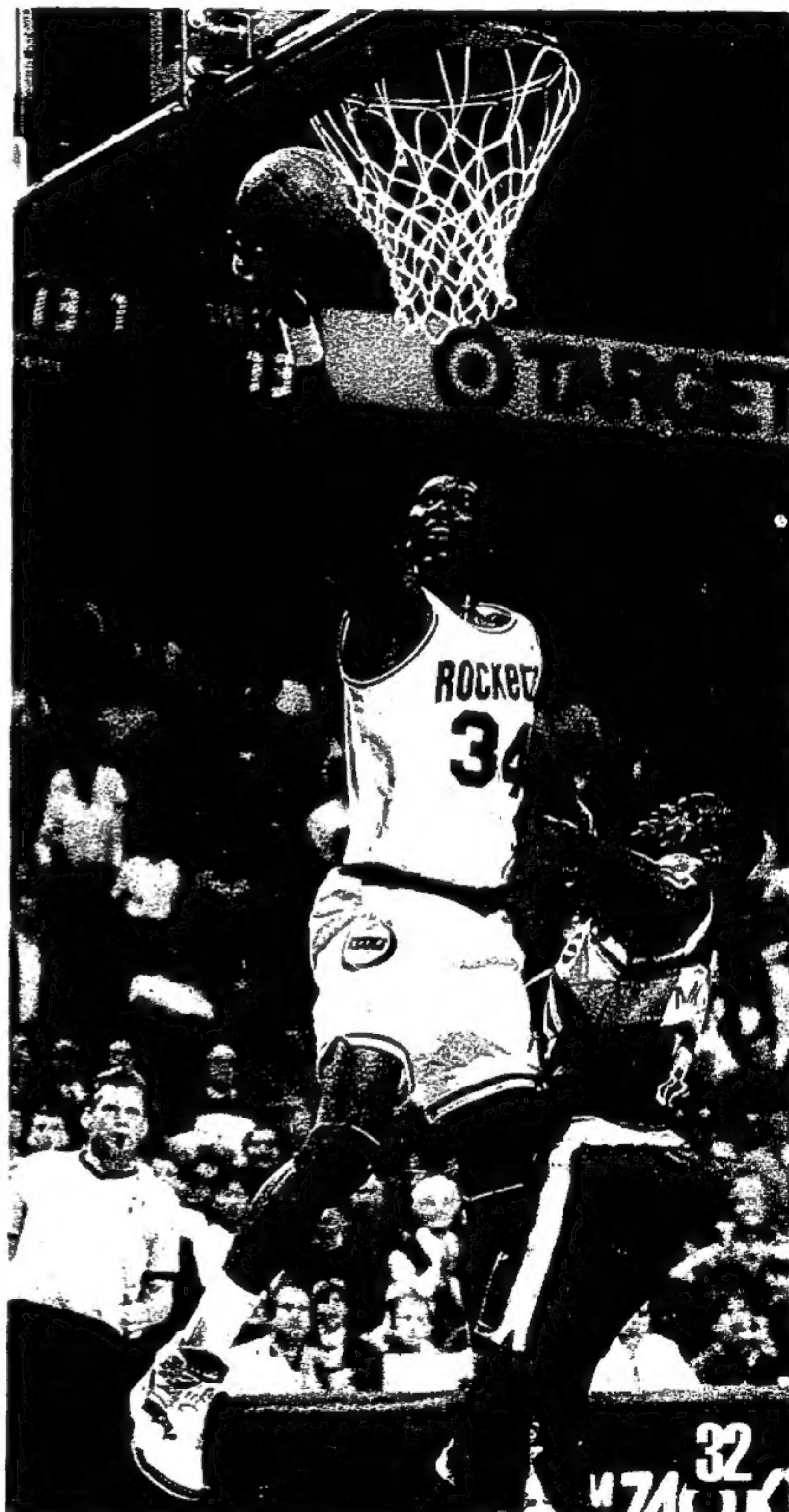
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CAUGHT ON THE FLY

Crimson in clover? Hardly

Fly hears the 'Bama (un)faithful are whisperin' behind **Bobes'** back. Too stubborn, y'all. Too conservative, y'all. Then there's this recurring rumor that A.D. **Hootie Ingram** promised Stallings' job to Tide defensive genius **Bill Oliver** if Oliver agreed to say thanks, but no thanks to several opportunities. Now Fly hears Stallings is in no hurry to leave (his job or his six-figure income). So much for keepin' the shine on the ol' national-title trophy, huh?

■ Speaking of 'Bama, Fly hears the Tide'll be pushin' extra hard on the recruitin' trail for D.B.s.

■ Fly's Top 5 or "If ya need a Q.B. in the first coupla rounds . . . (psst, **Charley**, this means you and the 'Skins)": 1. **Tront Diller**, Fresno State; 2. **Heath Shuler**, Tenn'ssee; 3. **Doug Nussmeier**, Idaho-ho-ho; 4a. **Jim Miller**, Michigan State; 4b. **Charlie Ward**, FSU; 5. **Steve McElair**, Alcorn State.

■ The Spies say **Chuck Daly** is thisclose to endin' his feud with **Willis**. Chuck's Net effect? Repeat after Fly: "Seeya. Wouldn't wanna be ya."

■ Speaking of the draft, a two-prong memo to draftniks: 1) This year's **Eric Swann** is a wide receiver name of **Steve Rhom**, who washed out at the U. of Minnehaha but has scouts intrigued with his size; 2) GET A LIFE!

■ OK, **Rob Doer**, what is Japanese for K?

■ Fly hears that if **Bob Ackles** ain't the man **Bill Bidwill** turns to to replace **Larry (No. 8 in Yer Program, No. 4 in the NFC East) Wilson** as the Cardinals' G.M., Ackles is good as gone: to hook up with **Dave Wannstedt** as the Bears' pro personnel chief.

■ In this week's episode of "How Bad Have Things Gotten for the Lakes?" It's showtime for the customer-service dweebs, who're puttin' full-court pressure on season-ducat holders. Says a spokesman: "It's like, if we're not going to win 60 games for them, then what can we do for them?" Well, winning 40 games would be a nice start.

■ The Spies say Tigers reliever **Mike Henneman** will be toiling elsewhere after his contract expires in two years. Fly hears he's leavin' because of the boos (sniff) he heard (sniff) last season (honk!) in Dee-troit. At \$141,666.66 per save for his '93 contract, Fly suggests buyin' a pair-o-earplugs.

■ Fly really enjoys the TV networks

sayin' they need baseball's realignment settled so they can plan their fall schedules. They plan those schedules?

■ The Narcoleptic Football League points to the two, count 'em, interesting games a weekend and says, "Hey, we're not boring. We said, hey, we're not boring. Someone nudge that guy and wake him up." C'mon Fly can read the weekly news releases (shaddup!) with attendance figures that include

(exclude?) thousands of no-shows. Sorry, **Tags**, we snooze, you lose. And even **Al Bundy** can figure that out.

■ Speaking of no-shows, Fly hears The 'Cuse is concerned about attendance despite a fast start. And the people who do show up are too quiet for **Jim (They Played Great, But Boy Did I Coach Lousy) Boehlm**. "Am I the only one in here with a voice?" he's screamed at the cheerleaders.

■ Hey, didn't you used to be CBS?

■ Proof that pitchin' is **Manute**-thin in the bigs: The Mariners were maneuverin' to draft **Charlie**

(**Keopsa Chunkin' Cholly**) **Hough**.

■ If you think everything's tubular in Ninerland . . . a coupla days after implodin' against the Falcons, teammates watched really, really, really defensive tackle **Ted Washington** and safety **Dana Hall** almost visit Knuckle City. Fly hears teammates are in Hall's corner, so to speak. Says one of Washington: "If everything doesn't go his way or just right, he blows up."

■ Fly hears this scenario for **Ben Duquette's** becoming the Bosox's G.M.: He goes about his job as the 'Spos' G.M., makes the trades, signs free agents, tenders contracts to vets. Then, in January, with the 'Spos built for '94, Owner **Claude (Pronounced: "Clod") Brochu** low-keys lettin' Duquette go so's to save . . . um, what's French for face?

■ Sure, **Norv Turner's** name is hotter'n Austin in August, but Fly keeps hearin' another — **Joe Gibbs** or no Joe Gibbs — when it comes to the expansion teams: **Paul Hackett**.

■ Finally, let's go to new Mizzou Coach **Larry Smith**. Coach, what knowledge do you bring with you from gettin' axed to leave at ol' SC. "I made a drastic mistake when I went to USC. I went on a show and I said, 'Southern Cal.' They hate to be called Southern Cal. . . . That's what I call them now."



Cheers? Boehlm's Orangemen aren't the toast of the town anymore.



Hair apparent: After 16 years as the Phillie Phanatic, Raymond is leaving to create a new character.

Pssst . . . pass it on

As Max Patkin eases out of his role as the Clown Prince of Baseball, David Raymond will be moving into it.

Patkin, who has been doing his routines for 48 years, mostly at minor league baseball stadiums, says he plans one more tour. "This is my last season," says Patkin, who has averaged about 80 games a year since 1990. "I'll be 74 on January 10. I'm only doing this because I have a book coming out."

Raymond, 37, has been the Phillie Phanatic at all games since the mascot's debut April 25, 1978. He did 81 home games, 70 minor league games and 200 local appearances as the Phanatic last year. His backup and successor, Tom Burgoyne, did about 200 appearances.

Raymond is leaving the Phillies to form Acme Mascots, along with Bonnie Erickson and Wayne Harrison, the Jim Henson Production veterans who designed the Muppet-influenced Phanatic costume 16 years ago.

Acme (a name evoking one of Raymond's great influences, Roadrunner cartoons) will develop a character that will tour minor league baseball and be available for other sports.

Raymond will become the Max Patkin of the 21st century. "That would be great," Raymond says. "He's my role model, my idol. He's the purest sense of this type of comedy."

Patkin says of Raymond, "He is the best mascot in baseball. I told him a long time ago, 'Why don't you go out and tour the minor leagues?'"

Patkin likes watching Raymond, but says, "My act was different. I'm a live act, not a mascot. You won't see any more live acts. You can't go on a ball field and tell jokes — the fans can't hear you. So now they put 'em in costumes. They have no personality. Except David Raymond."

Raymond and Patkin are alike in other ways. Both are originals. Both are artists in their own right. In Raymond's case, it's not the suit; others have worn it and not been funny. In Patkin's case, it's not the nose; he's funny even if you're too far away to see his face.

Both understand they are part of the sizzle, not the steak. "The game is the primary attraction," Raymond says. "You can't interfere with the game," Patkin says.

Raymond's company is setting out at the right time. The sale of minor league licensed goods grew to \$40 million last year and is expected to grow another 50 to 100 percent in '94, according to Jennifer St. Denis, licensing manager for minor leagues at Major League Baseball Properties.

She added that the attendance for minor league baseball last season was 30 million, 40 million fewer than at major league games.

—TED ROGERS and MIKE JACOBSEN

SOUND BITES

66

Bulls forward Horace Grant, after posting a career-high point total in a victory at Boston:

"I'm definitely going to tell my grandkids I scored 31 on Larry, Kevin and the Chief, and I hope they don't go back and look at the basketball archives."

ESPN commentator Bob Ley, whose network televised the World Cup draw last Sunday from Las Vegas, a glitzy show featuring the likes of Barry Manilow and Julio Iglesias:

"If Salvador Dali could produce a state lottery, this is what it would be."

Bret Saberhagen, on why he wants to stay with the Mets:

"I'd love to see what it's like to win around here."

Jay Leno, on the difference between the Redskins and the space shuttle Endeavour:

"Endeavour had a touchdown this week."

Pistons guard Joe Dumars, after missing 13 of 22 shots and committing four turnovers in a Pistons' loss to the Lakers:

"My dad told me to play and not to complain, so this isn't a complaint, but I'm hurt."

Mighty Ducks goalie Guy Hebert, on posting the first shutout in team history:

"(Ron Tugnutt) got the first win, so I knew I had to come up with something sooner or later other than the first loss."

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Nothing's easy

We prefer simplicity.

But the sad fact is that simple bowl names such as the Rose Bowl, the Sugar Bowl, the Cotton Bowl and the Orange Bowl aren't the way of the '90s. Instead, we get corporate gobbledygook — with official bowl names such as the Poulan/Weed Eater Independence Bowl (since 1990) and the Outback Steakhouse Gator Bowl (since 1992).

The bowls and their corporate title sponsors:

Florida Citrus Bowl: sponsored by the Florida Department of Citrus since 1983.

John Hancock Bowl: by John Hancock Financial



Bowl bites:
Now a word from their sponsors.

Top o' the heap

As 1993 comes to a close, it's time for THE SPORTING NEWS to let you know about the people who shaped your games off the field.

You know who we mean: the folks who decided you wouldn't get many regular-season baseball games televised on network television, the folks who decided which college football games would be on in your area of the country. And then there are the

Services since 1986 (a corporate sponsorship that consumed the Sun Bowl's five-decade identity).

Sugar Bowl: by USF&G Financial Services since 1987.

Aloha Bowl: by the Jeep/Eagle Division of Chrysler since 1987.

Cotton Bowl: by Mobil since 1989.

Orange Bowl: by Federal Express since 1990.

Holiday Bowl: by Thrifty Car Rental since 1991.

Fiesta Bowl: second year by IBM OS/2.

CarQuest Bowl: first year by CarQuest auto parts.

Copper Bowl: first year by Weiser Lock.

Liberty Bowl: first year by Memphis' St. Jude Hospital.

—DAVID MARTINDALE

Home sweet home



Moving? If the Sixers cross the river, Shawn Bradley could call Camden, N.J., home

You would think the NBA would know that it is the model league. Instead, it is slowly taking the path of the NFL, which is well-known for its teams that don't play in the cities they are named for (e.g. the New York Jets and the Los Angeles Rams).

But no. The NBA, as always, is on the move. And, with the 76ers possibly moving across the Delaware River to Camden, N.J., we began to wonder how many NBA teams actually play in the cities they're named for.

Thankfully, we found that most of them do and one of them is moving home. The Cleveland Cavaliers are in Richfield, O., but, effective August 1, 1994, will be moving to a new arena in Cleveland. Other hometown NBA teams that don't play at home? The Detroit Pistons play in Auburn Hills, Mich., the Los Angeles Lakers play in Inglewood, Calif., and the Washington Bullets play in Landover, Md.

Ray's way

What's our old buddy Ray Meyer been up to? If it's college basketball season, you can bet you know where he'll be — at a DePaul game, no doubt.

Meyer celebrated his 80th birthday last week in Jacksonville, Fla., by working his 1,362nd consecutive DePaul game. Meyer coached 42 seasons at DePaul for a 724-354 record (.671), and has kept his streak going as color commentator for the last 10 years for Chicago's WGN radio.

But his birthday was marred by the theft of \$500 from his hotel room. In a gesture of goodwill, the hotel reimbursed the loss.

—TOM GINETTI



Iron man: Meyer hasn't missed a DePaul radio gig in 10 seasons.

HIGH FIVES

MO VAUGHN, the Red Sox first baseman who played host to 250 inner-city kids, ages 8 to 16, at a Boston Ballet performance of "The Nutcracker." A year-round resident, Vaughn plans to open a youth center in Boston.

ANDRE M. DAVIS, the Baltimore Circuit Court judge who ruled that a paternity suit filed by a 25-year-old Baltimore woman against the Hornets' Larry Johnson should be heard publicly. In a five-page order filed last week, Davis wrote in part: "From the highest levels of the socio-economic strata of our society, in Hollywood and on Wall Street, to the all-too-common incidence of teen-age pregnancy, which has become a scourge of the inner city and the suburbs alike, the issue of out-of-wedlock births is a matter of ongoing and grave public concern and interest. The involvement of a public figure in such a case (and the attendant publicity) contributes, if only marginally, to an increase of understanding among laypersons of important rights and remedies in this area of the law."



Guy With a Gun: Talk about way off-target

LOW LIGHTS

FOXBORO STADIUM security, which ejected a Rhode Island constable for having a disparaging sign about New England kicker Scott Sisson, who since has been waived. George Kirk, 46, was shown the gate even after he took down his sign that read, "Home of Missin' Sisson." Silly us, we thought free speech and Patriots went together.

The TEXAS-PAN AMERICAN sports information department, which on the cover of its men's basketball media guide posed Greg Guy, NCAA Division I's top scorer last season, with a pistol. Before settling on the "Guy With a Gun" image, the school, in far south Texas, had photographed Guy holding a gun and wearing a sombrero. That concept was discarded because of concern it would have offended Mexican-Americans. After several complaints about the gangster-like cover, the school decided to change it. The new cover will show Guy in school clothes on top of a building on campus. What do high-powered rifles?

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It's like shopping in A2001



Dave
KINDRED

Christmas shopping, a customer entered a mall sporting goods store the other day and said he wanted to see the baseball gloves. A teen-aged sales clerk said, "Right over here, sir."

"No plastic gloves," the customer said. "I like leather."

"What color do you want?"

"Color?"

"We've got blue, red, black and white."

"A nice tan will do. And I want one made in the United States."

"They're all made here, aren't they?"

"Not even close. They're from China, Taiwan, Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. It's marked on the glove."

"Oh, I see. Which hand, sir, do you wear it on?"

"I'm righthanded."

"You want one for your right hand?"

Had the conversation gone on another few minutes, the clerk might have offered the customer a blue plastic Taiwanese lefthanded catcher's mitt. But the customer ended it before such a disaster could occur. As politely as possible, he told the clerk, "Civilization is coming to an end and this conversation is proof."

The clerk said, "Huh?"

Once upon a long time ago, all a kid wanted for Christmas was a baseball glove or a ball bat. Failing that, he would settle for a Hopalong Cassidy six-shooter. When the former kid went to the mall the other day, he told his wife, "Now it's lasers and death rays. They don't have any cowboy cap pistols. Whatever happened to Hopalong Cassidy?"

The wife laughed more than somewhat before saying, "Get in the 21st century, old fella."

At the threshold of the millennium, computers have replaced cowboys. One whole aisle at the toy store was filled with computer games, featuring football as orchestrated by John Madden, Joe Montana and Bill Walsh. You could buy boxing games with the damage done by Evander Holyfield and George Foreman. You could race Formula One cars, spike volleyballs, play soccer, challenge the Harlem Globetrotters, go one-on-one with Michael Jordan or strap on wheels for "Street Rebels Roller Hockey, The Radical Roller Rod Hockey Game."

A thousand dollars would buy enough computer games to simulate enough reality that you would never have time to put your hand in a baseball glove.

Still, the old fella had gone shopping for just such an artifact: a real baseball glove. He wanted to find a Wilson A2000. One day in the summer of 1962 it cost \$35 to buy the A2, hailed by major league players as a revolution in glove design. How sweet the smell of leather in Red Ringeisen's store that day; how natural the feel of the glove as it became part of an infielder's hand. All these years later, that glove, with its golden glow, sits within



Not a Hop-A-Long Hoopster model: A reminder of the old-fashioned way of making leather gloves.

At the threshold of the millennium,

computers have replaced cowboys.

And a thousand dollars would buy

enough computer games

to simulate enough reality

that you would never have time

to put your hand in a baseball glove.

reach on the former kid's desk, the best glove ever made. Boys want to be men and men want to be boys.

So, just before the old fella told the teen-aged clerk to leave him alone, he asked one more question: "Where are your A2000s?"

The clerk said, "What are those?"

"Never mind."

The store had one A2000. It was leather and it was tan and, alas, it was disappointing. It was smooth and slick and stiff and clunky. It seemed all artifice, no character. It cost \$119.99.

Real baseball bats once were icons turned by craftsmen from trees proud to have done their part in making America great. You could put your hands on a Louisville Slugger and feel better for it. You could trace your fingers over the autograph burned into the wood. The bat cost maybe \$5. A kid could go to sleep with an Al Kaline beside him.

Now they're all space-age metal. You go to the mall and ask to see a bat, and a teen-aged clerk takes you to a rack of alleged bats. They are not bats. They are hollow tubes of aluminum. They are graphite. They may be titanium and boron and Kryptonite. They are cylinders of high-tech despair. To move your hands over a metal bat is to feel the absolute perfect smoothness of nothingness, the triumph of seamless sterility. It would be like sleeping with a garden tool.

"It's been a while since I shopped for bats," the old fella told a sales clerk. "Do you sell

any wooden bats?"

"Wood?" said the clerk, who at age 18 may never have touched wood in his life, not in a baseball bat, a pencil or a toothpick. He was solicitous, as if his customer wore the identifying clothes of an earlier century, a creature deposited before him by a time machine. "No, sir, no wood. We special order wooden bats. Hardly anybody uses them now. Look at this one, it's real nice."

He handed over a graphite tube with a zippered cover that slips over the barrel to protect the thing from scratches. The garden tool cost \$89.99.

So the old fella bought no glove and bought no bat. Nor did he buy any of the other sports stuff in the store, such as "Electronic Hot Shot Basketball With Motorized Moving Backboard" and "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Poppin' Pins Bowling" and "Super Spike V'ball" and "Super High Impact Bone Crushing Arcade Smash Football."

He asked a sales clerk, "Do you have any Hopalong Cassidy stuff?"

She said, "I'm sorry, what did you say?"

"Hopalong Cassidy. The movie cowboy. Had his sidekicks named Lucky and California. Rode a great white horse called Topper."

She said to follow her and we walked three aisles over. There she pointed to a shelf on which there was a basketball game called "Hop-A-Long Hoopster."

The clerk said, "Is this what you mean?"

The old fella said no, not quite, but thanks for looking. And you have a Merry Christmas.

Dave Kindred is a contributing writer for THE SPORTING NEWS.

OUR TURN

Fomenting change

Jim Lindstrom felt the frustration many of us feel as fans.

Lindstrom took his wife and three small boys some 200 miles from their home in Vulcan, Mich., to attend two Brewers games last season. He paid \$75 for tickets (obstructed view, too), and had to get a motel room, too.

In a letter to THE SPORTING NEWS, he writes, "What I got for my money was a steady stream of beer vendors passing beer and money back and forth down our row and up and down the aisles. There were drunks slobbering and passing out around us. And there was constant foul language."

Lindstrom concludes with a challenge to Bud Selig, the president and chief executive officer of the Brewers: "I am sorry, Mr. Selig, but County Stadium is no longer a place to take my family to watch the great game of baseball."

There are fans saying the same thing about ballparks throughout the country. Many of us with families wouldn't mind if alcohol were banned from ballparks, but that isn't realistic. Baseball not only needs the revenue generated by the sale of beer, it has a long and prosperous relationship with those companies.

This is a point driven home by a team named "the Brewers." So what are the Brewers doing to keep the drinkers from driving away families?

"We are very sensitive to this," Selig says. "We have family sections (totaling 2,695 of the 53,192 seats) where there is no alcohol or smoking. We instruct vendors what to do. We have programs. I walk the ballpark during games. I watch for this. Very rarely do we have problems."

The Brewers will provide soft drinks to the designated driver in a group and cab rides home to anyone who has had too much alcohol, says Terry Ann Peterson, the club's director of stadium administration. Those programs are co-sponsored by Coca-Cola and Miller beer.

The 1,000 people who work at games are paid to undergo two hours of training to deal with alcohol and fans. They are told to warn rowdy fans ("That usually stops it," Peterson says), and cut off beer sales to those who have had too much — and spread the word to other vendors. Fans have been ejected.

While they had "fewer problems than ever" in 1993, Selig says, he agrees that there can still be some. To that end, there is a Fan Assistance Center that, Peterson says, handles "any type of problem."

While there is no direct budget for the alcohol-related programs, Peterson acknowledges that the Brewers are spending in the low six figures.

Because of Selig's role as de facto commissioner (officially, he is chairman of the Executive Council), there is special interest in the Brewers' handling of alcohol and fans.

"All the clubs are very sensitive to it," Selig says. "I think baseball is addressing it. But, let's face it, some places are better than others."

The Brewers are on the board of BADD — Business Against Drunk Driving, a MADD-like group that started in Milwaukee and has gone national. TSN hopes this is one small-market idea that spreads.

A league in the state of flux

Big East's mirage of the '80s gives way to reality of the '90s



William C. RHODEN

Seems like only yesterday that the Big East was regarded as the caviar of conferences. Georgetown, St. John's, Villanova and Syracuse were kings of the hill. The Big East was a slick new corporation whose product was basketball and whose medium was television.

When when you consider the mercurial changes taking place in college sports, it seems the Big East of the 1980s was a mirage, not a conference. Not in the sense that the Big Ten, Atlantic Coast, Southeastern and Pacific 10 are conferences, whose members compete against each other in all sports and have a mutual allegiance.

From the beginning, the Big East was primarily a marriage of opportunity. Dave Gavitt, the founder and first commissioner, saw a golden chance to consolidate a lucrative East Coast TV market by organizing independent colleges into a conference.

It worked well: the relatively low overhead of a college basketball team without the burden of sharing facilities with major college football. The conference thrived.

About three years ago, discontent began setting in. Boston College, Pittsburgh and Syracuse — schools that invested in major football and basketball — threatened to leave and form an all-sports conference.

Faced with the departure of three critical members, Mike Tranchese, who replaced Gavitt as commissioner, entered into another marriage of convenience — adding Miami, primarily to establish a football presence.

The Big East then rented Rutgers, Temple and West Virginia from the Atlantic 10 and borrowed Virginia Tech from the Metro Conference to round out what it called the Big East football conference.

As it happened, Big East football has grown faster than anyone expected and has replaced basketball — temporarily — as a measure of excellence. On New Year's Day, Tranchese will watch three Big East teams compete in major bowl games.



Hoping: Nehlen wants full membership.

One of them, West Virginia, will play in the Sugar Bowl with an undefeated record and an outside shot at a national championship. Miami, which finished second in the conference, will play in the Fiesta, and Boston College, the team that upset Notre Dame, will play in the Carquest Bowl.

Herein lies the problem. The four hybrid schools — West Virginia, Temple, Rutgers and Virginia Tech — want into the Big East as full members. Don Nehlen, the West Virginia football coach, openly calls for it. Temple basketball Coach John Chaney says he has no problems with Temple playing in the Big East.

But the six Big East schools that invest only in big-time basketball — Georgetown, St. John's, Villanova, Seton Hall, Providence and Connecticut — aren't in favor of expansion. Why? Take a guess.

"Money's not the only reason," St. John's Athletic Director Jack Kaiser says, "but it's

as good a reason as any."

For the Atlantic 10 schools, a possible merger has taken on a degree of urgency.

Commissioners of the Atlantic Coast, Big East, Big Eight, Big Ten, Pac-10, Southeastern, Southwest and Western Athletic conferences met recently in Dallas. A proposal was discussed that could reduce the number of top football schools from 106 to about 80. Neither the Atlantic 10 nor the Metro was represented at the meeting.

The next step would be formation of a so-called super football division made up of teams with similar programs. A significant component would be that the members could create and enforce their own rules while remaining members of the NCAA. The schools want to control their destiny in all voting matters except basketball.

What troubles me about the meeting in Dallas and the idea of expansion is the underlying philosophy, which seems to embrace a rich-get-richer ethic and everyone else fends for himself. The idea of sharing, spreading the wealth, seems to have gone the way of the drop kick and two-handed set shot.

On the other hand, maybe exclusivity isn't so bad. Too many institutions are playing above their heads — and resources — and need to reassess their places in the larger scheme of things.

There is even a proposal from a number of historically black schools to organize their own Division I football conference.

This puts the Big East — specifically Tranchese — between a rock and hard place. In his heart of hearts, Tranchese probably sees expansion as a plus — possibly a necessity — for the survival and well-being of his conference.

Some Big East athletic directors are resisting expansion and will probably vote to maintain the status quo. In the rapidly evolving world of sports business, status quo won't be good enough.

William C. Rhoden is a columnist for the New York Times.

Painting another portrait of the Irish

A long but fascinating look at the rise of Notre Dame



Steve GIETSCHIER

Shake Down the Thunder: The Creation of Notre Dame Football (By Murray Sperber. 634 pp. Henry Holt. \$25).

Buried beneath all the hoopla surrounding publication of "Under the Tarnished Dome" (reviewed in TSN, October 18) lies this other book about the Notre Dame football establishment and how it came to be. Overly long and sometimes tedious, "Shake Down the Thunder" is nevertheless a work of sport history unlike anything seen before.

Based on extensive research in the University of Notre Dame archives, Sperber's book explores in immoderate detail the complex forces and personalities that came together to transform a small Catholic college located in the middle of nowhere into the country's preeminent football powerhouse bent simultaneously on becoming a great institution of higher learning.

It will come as a revelation to many readers that Notre Dame was a football outcast during much of its early history. Potential opponents held that Notre Dame's academic program lacked sufficient rigor to qualify as a true college curriculum and that its athletes were routinely kept on team rosters for more years than generally was acceptable.

These perceptions, inflamed by a pernicious dose of anti-Catholicism rampant in Indiana and fueled especially by University of Michigan Coach Fielding Yost, kept Notre Dame out of the Western Conference (today's Big Ten) and persuaded Western

Conference members and others not to schedule games against the school.

This anti-Notre Dame pose also set the stage for Knute Rockne, hired as head coach in 1918. Sperber calls Rockne "an extremely smart man in a ruthless profession who built winning teams step-by-step, sometimes breaking rules, always seeing the world realistically."

Rockne concocted Notre Dame's unique formula for football success: "a rich athletic culture, fan identification based on ethnicity and religion, an innovative and charismatic coach, a phenomenal won-lost record, powerful media allies, an immense number of supporters throughout the country."

But Rockne was no saint. He battled constantly with the school's academic leadership who sought to hold the athletic program to standards tougher than their critics' schools enforced. Still, Sperber shows how and why Rockne became a myth, primarily through the hagiographic film "Knute Rockne — All American" that set his image in stone.

Rockne's immediate successors on the football field, Hunk Anderson and Elmer Layden, had enormous difficulty dealing with his legacy, but Father John F. O'Hara, university president from 1934 to '40, made the myth come to life. He adopted a strategy Sperber calls "Fortress Notre Dame," making the school's athletic policies unassailable even to biased observers while improving its academics dramatically. And that is where this book ends.

Sperber's fascinating story could not have been told without the office files of the Notre Dame athletic department, 1909-1934, that he uncovered in the university archives. The trouble with this book, though, is that Sperber fell too much in love with these records and let them organize his work for him. Big chunks of his chapters consist solely of strings of quotations from archival documents strung together one after another and broken up by four or five paragraphs explicating each one.

The Story of a Game: The Official History of Basketball (Written and directed by Casey Jones. Strand Home Video. 2 vols. \$29.99).

According to the producers, this video presentation, narrated by the peerless Jim McKay, is the first to contain authorized footage from the NCAA, the NBA, the Olympics and the Federation of International Basketball Associations. That's the plus side.

The minus side is, unfortunately, more considerable. The scripts for these tapes are woefully organized and do not come close to being a history of basketball. What makes this production "official" remains unstated and undetectable to the viewer.

Note: "Marge Schott: Unleashed" by Mike Bass, one of our 10 best sports books of 1993, is published by Sagamore Publishing.

Steve Gietschier is Archivist of THE SPORTING NEWS.

VOICE OF THE FAN

Revelation

"Now I know why I've always respected Ken Ruetters and thought Richard Dent was a no-class whiner." (TSN, December 6)

Bill Ripp
Sun Prairie, Wis.



I liked TSN's story on Ken Ruetters and Richard Dent. Now I know why I've always respected Ruetters and thought Dent was a no-class whiner. Dent complains of dirty tactics coming out of Green Bay; I think he and his teammates should take a look in the mirror, especially under Mike Ditka and Buddy Ryan.

Bill Ripp
Sun Prairie, Wis.

I thought Richard Dent sounded like a big cry baby in your story "The battle within the battle." He claimed he was held several times. He said he could tell the first game was in Green Bay by the way the calls went. Well, they have played twice now, and Ken Ruetters clearly outplayed Dent. By the way, the second game was in Chicago.

Kevin Piotrowski
Stevens Point, Wis.

Excuse me

In the December 6 issue, TSN described the infamous mistake of the Cowboys' Leon Lett as inexcusable. The only thing that is inexcusable is the fact that the media are calling the play inexcusable. In case you haven't figured it out by now, everyone makes mistakes. From my point of view, the only reason anyone has publicized this mistake is because of Lett's unfortunate experience in the last Super Bowl. If you criticized every player for every mistake he makes in one year, you would have had 500 pages on Don Majkowski a year ago.

Andy Brown
La Crosse, Wis.

Sin of inclusion

I'm sorry, Terry Frei, but to even think of mentioning Tom Landry in the same story with Bill Belichick is a sin (TSN, December 13). Great coaches don't release their starting quarterbacks when their teams are in first place and their backups are injured. What Belichick did was dump a man with "diminishing skills" for a man

with no skills. "Heartless dehumanization" only works when the one with no heart at least has a brain.

Bradley Dunn
Concord Township, O.

I can vividly recall how delighted Owner Art Modell was with Bernie Kosar when Bernie manipulated the NFL to become a Brown. Modell praised Kosar as a great quarterback, a person with superior intelligence and an extraordinary leader. He will not abandon Bernie. In fact, it might not be too long before headlines in Cleveland read, "Kosar replaces Belichick."

Don Carline
Boulder, Colo.

No help needed

Why do Gene Wojciechowski and so many of his peers think Michigan is the greatest gift to basketball (TSN, December 13)? North Carolina did not need Chris Webber's timeout. The Tar Heels were 34-4 and the best team in the nation — period.

Charley Shelton
Columbia, S.C.

Tighten it up

Mitch Albom's story on Jalen Rose and Jimmy King could have been covered in three paragraphs of stats and similarities (TSN, December 6). Eliminate their exploits on the court and no one would care about either. I kept reading to find something about one of them that I could like, but never did.

Donald Smith
Delaware, O.

Things'll turn around

Sure the Mets have made some bad trades and some bad decisions in recent years, but, hey, the Mets aren't the only team to fall from grace (TSN, November 29). Like they say, what goes around comes around.

As a lifelong, diehard Mets fan, I suffered through the early days right up to the championship of '69, through the lean years of the late '70s and early '80s waiting for '86. I know the team will come back.

Chris Barnett
Clarks Summit, Pa.

CHOICE VOICE

"I wish West Virginia were going to the Orange Bowl, but I must say TSN has been more than fair, including Ivan Maisel's column (December 13). He told the bare, ugly truth and all Mountie fans should appreciate that."

Kevin Davidson
Elkins, W. Va.



We know that he can do it: Mutombo is the light at the end of the Nuggets' tunnel.

He will lead them

Two thumbs up to Kevin Simpson's story about the Denver Nuggets (TSN, December 13). Truly the Nuggets are a talented team without a true "superstar." I think with underrated center Dikembe Mutombo, the Nuggets will be a surprise team in the playoffs.

Ben Staley
Rockford, O.

He's on a roll

Dave Kindred is right on the money when he says there needs to be an annual tournament to determine the college football national championship (TSN, November 29). If the polls are going to continue to decide the national championship in college football, those who vote in The Associated Press and CNN/USA Today polls need to decide whether to use overall record and strength of schedule or just overall record as the standard for ranking the teams. If a consensus of opinion can't be reached on this issue, a playoff system should be created immediately.

Chris Sherlock
Monroe, Ga.

I think Dave Kindred just assumed no one would watch a West Virginia-Nebraska game. I have read several columns by sportswriters saying the same thing, and I have read several letters from fans (from across the country) saying they would watch. I truly believe many fans thought West Virginia deserved a shot at the title. I know who I'll be watching January 1.

Pat Garrison
Chesapeake, Va.

I was bummed out because I could no longer get excited about an NBA game (and I'm a fan with a satellite dish who seldom missed a Bulls game in six years). I was wondering if anyone else missed Michael Jordan as much as I do.

Then my TSN arrived with a great column by Dave Kindred lamenting Michael's departure and echoing all of my sentiments about what's missing in the game without him (December 13). Now I don't feel so alone. Thanks, Dave, for understanding. Does anyone know of a support group for people having Jordan withdrawals?

Carolyn Wade
Vancouver, Wash.

Dave Kindred's column about the loss of Michael Jordan is about one month late and incredibly unnecessary. I, along with several million other people, are quite sick of hearing about Jordan. The coverage was great when he was still playing, but he is retired and the league has moved on despite the loss of one of the greatest players ever. Notice the word *one*. Get over it and write about something worth reading — like more than one page of NHL coverage stuck way in the back.

Andy Ranck
Marissa, Ill.

Stuck in the ointment

Fly commented that the deals cut recently by Eddie Murray and Dennis Martinez "would have looked better 10 years ago" (TSN, December 13). Murray was a consistent player this season on the field and was an oasis in the Mets' locker room. And how bad can Martinez be if the pitching-rich Braves made a move for him down the stretch?

What's the matter Fly? Can't fill the extra space TSN is generously giving you?

Ryan Gross
Columbia, S.C.

His decision

As a faithful Bulls fan, I was horrified to read that Bob Verdi seems to think Michael Jordan hasn't lived up to his or the fans' expectations (TSN, November 22). Why is it a crime that the man wanted to go out on top? Verdi also says it seemed that Jordan was hiding something by retiring. Mr. Verdi, you shouldn't make empty accusations. If a man has millions of dollars to spend and wants to gamble it, then that's his decision. If he wants to golf, it's his decision. If he wants to retire, it's his decision. I'm proud that Jordan had the good grace to leave when he was the greatest. He will always be a class act in my book.

Megan McDonald
Attica, Ia.

Discrediting credit

In the letter "Banning the best" in the December 20 issue, a reader says the undefeated Auburn Tigers won't be playing in a bowl game or for the national championship because of NCAA violations. That is correct.

The reader goes on to say that the Tennessee Volunteers, who will face Penn State in the Citrus Bowl, lost to Auburn. The Volunteers' only loss was to Florida. They tied Alabama. Being a Vols fan, I was offended by this error and appalled that TSN would credit such inaccuracy.

Glen Shaw
Aynor, S.C.

Got a comment? THE SPORTING NEWS would love to hear from you. Write Voice of the Fan, 1212 N. Lindbergh Blvd., St. Louis, Mo. 63132, or fax your message to us at 314-993-7723. THE SPORTING NEWS reserves the right to edit letters for brevity and content.

Upon further review . . .

■ Auburn's Wayne Gandy was inadvertently left off TSN's All-America first team and West Virginia's Rich Braham and Northwestern (La.) State's Marcus Spears were left off the second team in the December 20 issue.

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REPORTS

- A four-page report containing the final results will be mailed the week of January 3, 1994. This report will include your team summary, league standings and statistical category point breakdown, and the top 25 teams overall.
- In the case of a tie, the prizes will be added together and split between the tied teams.

TRANSACTIONS CAN BE MADE DEC 28TH THRU JAN 1ST

- A player who has played can be replaced with another player who has not played.
- After a player's team has started to play he cannot be added to your team.
- To make player transactions, a toll-free 800 number and an account number will be provided.
- All transactions are \$2.50 each.
- A maximum of 10 transactions are permitted.
- Final transactions must be made by noon CST on Jan. 1, 1994.

LEAGUE FORMATION

- Each entry is placed into a 25 team league.
- Leagues are formed on a first-come, first-served basis. Entries will be limited to 3000.
- All teams compete for league and overall prizes.

ROSTER

- Consists of players participating in bowl games from Dec. 24, 1993 thru Jan. 1, 1994.
- Your team consists of 30 players:
5 Kickers 10 Running Backs
5 Quarterbacks 10 Ends / Receivers
- All 30 positions must be filled.
- Positions of players listed are decided by CDM, Inc. and will not be changed.
- There are no player salaries and no salary cap.

Place	Overall Prizes (all entries)	League Prizes (25 teams)
1st	\$5,000	\$100
2nd	\$2,500	2nd place teams will receive Sporting News Fantasy Challenge Merchandise.
3rd	\$1,000	
4th	\$500	
5th	\$300	
6th to 10th	\$200	
11th to 15th	\$100	
16th to 25th	\$50	

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Sunday thru Friday
with our Sports Commissioners
Call 1-800-568-6288

SCORING

- Each team will be ranked within its league and overall by five statistical categories:
Total Passing Yards Kicker Scoring
Total Rushing Yards Total Scoring
Total Receiving Yards
- Total scoring points are awarded as follows:
Extra Point 1 point Passing TD 3 points
Field Goal 3 points Receiving TD 3 points
Rushing TD 5 points All other TD's 6 points
- Rankings will be determined by using the Robinsone-style ranking system. Each team is ranked by league and overall.
- In each of the 5 categories, teams are ranked from first to last and points are assigned based on these rankings. For instance, if you are first in a category in your league you will earn 25 points, the second place team in that category receives 24 points, and so forth down to the last place team which earns 1 point. This system is used for all 5 categories, each of which have equal value. In the overall team ranking, the maximum number of points is determined by the total number of entries received in The Sporting News™ College Bowl Challenge.
- Stats are accumulated for each of the final 30 players on your team as of noon CST on Jan. 1, 1994.
- All football statistics accumulated by the players on your team, regardless of what position they play during the bowl game, contribute to a team's statistics totals. Special team yardage does not count.
- Stats by a player dropped from your team do not count.
- Regular season statistics do not contribute to team's statistics totals.
- Overall points are calculated by ranking your team's statistics totals versus all other entries in The Sporting News™ Fantasy Football College Bowl Challenge.
- The Sporting News™ Fantasy Football College Bowl Challenge welcomes entries from around the world. All fees, however, must be paid with U.S. funds.
- Mail your entry with check or money order to: CDM, Inc. 2043 Woodland Parkway, Suite 200, St. Louis, MO 63146-4235
- Mailed entries must be postmarked by December 24, 1993 and received by December 31, 1993. Team changes cannot be made until your entry is received and entered.
- Our toll line is 314-991-1511.

KICKERS			QUARTERBACKS (cont)			RUNNING BACKS			RUNNING BACKS (cont)			RUNNING BACKS (cont)			RECEIVERS			RECEIVERS (cont)		
ID	PLAYER	TM	ID	PLAYER	TM	ID	PLAYER	TM	ID	PLAYER	TM	ID	PLAYER	TM	ID	PLAYER	TM	ID	PLAYER	TM
1	BENTLEY, SCOTT	FSU	111	STANLEY, WILLIS	VA	201	MORRIS, BYRON	TTCH	201	ELATES	TM	201	ELATES	TM	401	YARBOROUGH, RYAN	WM	401	WESTBROOK, MICHAEL	COL
2	BECKSVORTH, JOHN	TECH	112	COLLINS, TODD	MICH	202	RIVERS, RON	FRES	202	DUMK, WARREN	PSU	202	AYERS, DEREK	TM	402	STORTON, JOHNNIE	USC	402	LEE, KEVIN	AL
3	MAHONEY, DEREK	FRES	113	BARR, DAVE	FL	203	BOSS, BRENT	WIS	203	PHILLIPS, L	NEB	203	HERNDON, WILLIAM	NC	403	MORRIS, JOHNNIE	USC	403	MILLER, KEITH	NC
4	DAVIS, JUD	FL	114	WUERFEL, DAVID	FL	204	WHITT, ERIC	FLA	204	BOHLELL, ROD	KSU	204	BAITS, MICHAEL	IND	404	PALMER, DAVE	AL	404	COLEMAN, HILL	MSU
5	MERTEN, BJORN	UCLA	115	STEWART, KORDIA	COL	205	WALKER, ROBERT	WV	205	WITHERSPOON, DERRICK	CLEM	205	HOOD, GREG	CLEM	405	MCORVEY, KEZ	PSU	405	HOOKS, GREG	UTAH
6	PROCTOR, MICHAEL	AL	116	GUNDT, DAVID	OK	206	GARNER, CHARLIE	TECH	206	ZELLARS, RAY	IND	206	GEORGE, EDUE	PSU	406	JACKSON, CHARLES	COL	406	SEYMOUR, DARRIN	OK
7	PENDERGAST, KEVIN	MSU	117	BURFESTER, PAUL	IOWA	207	THOMAS, DWAYNE	VT	207	RUTHERFORD, REYNARD	CAL	207	HAYES, JARON	PSU	407	COLEMAN, EDUE	MSU	407	VAUGHN, TERRY	AZ
8	PIGHETTI, TRIVY	NC	118	DESHAZO, MAURICE	VT	208	HARRIS, RAYMOND	OSU	208	DAY, CHARLES	VA	208	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS	408	GALLOWAY, JOEY	OSU	408	NAYES, MERCURY	MICH
9	VENETOULES, TERRY	TEAM	119	BEVELL, GARRILL	WIS	209	BECKON, LEE	ND	209	COLLIER, TERRY	OK	209	LAW, BRETT	IND	409	JACKSON, JACK	FL	409	RUNNING, MITCH	KSU
10	YERGENSON, CHRIS	UTAH	120	STANICK, JASON	NC	210	JONES, CALVIN	NEB	210	JONES, BILLY	AZ	210	LEWIS, THOMAS	IND	410	LEWIS, THOMAS	IND	410	HOLMES, LARRY	VA
11	DAVIS, JON	TTCH	121	WILLIAMS, JAMAL	MSU	211	JACKSON, CURTIS	NEB	211	BUTLER, BYRON	OSU	211	PHILLIPS, MOSE	TECH	411	EDGEMAN, BOBBY	PSU	411	DOMAR, BYRCE	BYU
12	BRID, GORD	CAL	122	HARVEY, TERRY	MSU	212	CARTER, JAMAL	PSU	212	DAVIS, RICKY	UCLA	212	FITZGERALD, BRIAN	NCST	412	ORRIS, ERIC	BYU	412	DAVIS, TYRONE	VA
13	FAYAL, CRAIG	PSU	123	COOK, WAYNE	UCLA	213	CHRISTOPHERSON, RYAN	WY	213	WILLIAMS, KEITH	UTAH	213	DOTSON, DAVID	USC	413	HILL, LLOYD	TTCH	413	DANFORD, J.C.	WIS
14	HERPICK, JOE	BYU	124	COLLINS, KERRY	PSU	214	JACKSON, LEON	NC	214	WILLIAMS, KEITH	UTAH	214	SCHLESINGER, GARY	NEB	414	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS	414	HUNTON, ROBERT	NCST
15	BERGER, MITCH	COL	125	PULLI, COREY	TEAM	215	WHEATLEY, TYRONE	MICH	215	WILLIAMS, JAMAL	BYU	215	JOHN, JIMMY	WV	415	CALDWELL, MIKE	CAL	415	HARRISON, TONY	TEAM
16	BLANTON, SCOTT	OK	126	KOLCHER, JAKE	WV	216	CAMPBELL, DARNELL	NC	216	JONES, PIERRE	UTAH	216	FARMER, ROBERT	ND	416	DERAMUS, LEE	WIS	416	HILL, ED	WV
17	MANOLOPOULOS	IND	127	COLLINS, RYAN	MSU	217	ANDERSON, JAMAL	UTAH	217	JONES, LAURIE	MIA	217	BAKABUTULA	MICH	417	JONES, CHARLIE	FRES	417	GRIFF, RAY	NCST
18	PREWITT, DANE	MIA	128	MCDOUGAL, KEVIN	ND	218	WILLIAMS, MAURICE	JEN	218	CORNER, ANTHONY	NC	218	EDWARDS, MARC	ND	418	CLARIBONE, DERRON	UTAH	418	BOYD, NIAN	NC
19	MCALPIN, STEVE	AZ	129	BARKER, JAY	AL	219	THOMAS, ROONEY	TEAM	219	GREEN, DAVID	NC	219	PALMER, DAVE	AL	419	HILL, LLOYD	TTCH	419	MILLER, MIKE	ND
20	WILLIAMS, TIM	OSU	130	PAC, JOHN	IND	220	CHAPMAN, LINDSEY	CAL	220	HOOD, DANNON	KEA	220	HILL, BRUCE	PSU	420	MITCHELL, PETE	TTCH	420	GRACE, KEN	USC
21	WRIGHT, TATE	KSU	131	HOYING, BOBBY	OSU	221	WASHINGTON, JERRAD	VA	221	EDWARDS, TOMMY	VT	221	COTHRAN, JEFF	OSU	421	LOCKETT, KEVIN	KSU	421	CHRISTENSEN, STEVE	BYU
22	VICTORY, STEVE	NCST	132	WHITE, DAN	AZ	222	CARTER, ONITWAUN	AZ	222	HILLER, JAMES	UCLA	222	MAKOVICIA, JEFF	NEB	422	JONES, MIKE	WV	422	DAWSON, LAKE	ND
23	GORDON, DAVID	NC	133	DEAN, TERRY	FL	223	DOWNS, GARY	NCST	223	EDMOND, BRIAN	VT	223	MEMORICKS, TERRY	WV	423	COLEMAN, ANDRE	KSU	423	DEAN, ANTHONY	IOWA
24	WELCH, NELSON	CLEM	134	COOK, F	MSU	224	WARREN, LAMONT	COL	224	MOORE, JERALD	OK	224	FRANKLIN, CHRIS	CLEM	424	SMITH, TERRY	CLEM	424	WARREN, COREY	OK
25	WELCH, NELSON	CLEM	135	FRANZ, TOMME	MIA	225	JACKSON, SEAN	PSU	225	HOLMAN, STEVE	MSU	225	MCDOUGAL, CARL	WIS	425	JONES, CT	MSU	425	WATSON, ABRAHAM	NEB
26	WELCH, NELSON	CLEM	136	JONES, ROOKE	JEN	226	FLITCHER, TORRELL	MSU	226	TAYLOR, GARY	AZ	226	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS	426	LUK, MEY	UTAH	426	DISNEY, TROY	AZ
27	KORDEE, JORI	VA	137	SAPP, PATRICK	CLEM	227	GOULBOURNE, DUANE	MSU	227	SWANSON, JOE	VT	227	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS	427	KEARNEY, JAY	WV	427	PRATT, EDDY	WV
28	ELEZOVIC, PETER	MICH	138	RENDER, GREGG	NCST	228	THOMAS, CRAIG	MSU	228	SMITH, EMMY	CLEM	228	MCCLURE, TRAVIS	OSU	428	MITCHELL, DERRICK	TTCH	428	HALL, ALBERT	OK
29	STODANOVICH, BILL	MSU	139	STODANOVICH, BILL	MSU	229	ARCHIE, MIKE	PSU	229	EDMOND, BRIAN	VT	229	FITZPATRICK, CHRIS	LOU	429	FAULKNER, CRAIG	TECH	429	HOWATZKE, TIM	BYU
30	STODANOVICH, TODD	WV	140	POWERS, BRETT	OSU	230	DAGLE, ANTHONY	FRES	230	EDMOND, BRIAN	VT	230	HALL, ROBERT	TTCH	430	BAKER, MIKE	WV	430	ANDERSON, TYLER	BYU
31	SCHEWITZ, BYRON	NEB	141	KARNELL, DANNY	PSU	231	SALAS, RASHEEN	COL	231	MOORE, JERALD	OK	231	COTTON, CHRIS	NCST	431	ASHER, JAMIE	LOU	431	FAURIA, CHRISTIAN	COL
32	MINOLIN, TONY	WV	142	BURDOOP, BRIAN	AL	232	SMITH, J.J.	KSU	232	EDWARDS, TYRONE	CAL	232	EDWARDS, TYRONE	CAL	432	TELLER, AC	MIA	432	ROAM, MIKE	WIS
33	ROMANO, TODD	IOWA	143	SACCA, JOHN	PSU	233	WILLIAMS, SHERMAN	AL	233	CHAPMAN, ALTON	TTCH	233	LANE, ERIC	TECH	433	FREEMAN, ANTONIO	NC	433	SALLIHOE, TERENCE	BYU
34	LEONARD, JIM	WV	144	THOMAS, MIKE	NC	234	ALLEN, JAMES	OK	234	SHIRLEY, DWIGHT	NC	234	SHIRLEY, DWIGHT	NC	434	CANNON, CLARENCE	NC	434	BAILEY, EDDIE	ND
35	SALLIHOE, MIKE	USC	145	WALKER, ROB	UCLA	235	CHAMBER, JERMAINE	ND	235	EDWARDS, TYRONE	CAL	235	SHIRLEY, DWIGHT	NC	435	WILLIAMS, TYDUS	FRES	435	BROWNING, ALFONZO	KEN
36	HALL, JOHN	WIS	146	STARKE, JON	PSU	236	TERRY, RYAN	IOWA	236	MOORE, JERALD	OK	236	COTTON, CHRIS	NCST	436	ALEXANDER, DERRICK	MICH	436	WAEZUZZO, HEATHY	CAL
37	MAZZONE, TOM	WV	147	FALLA, PAUL	ND	237	WALTERS, SHAWN	USC	237	SMITH, MARQUETTE	PSU	237	WITMAN, JON	PSU	437	FREER, MATT	PSU	437	OUTLAW, MARCOLON	MSU
38	FORB, COLE	USC	148	DRYCE, CHRIS	ND	238	STEWART, JAMES	MIA	238	CHANDLER, DWAYNE	OK	238	WYATT, RAMEY	KEA	438	RENNER, CORY	TECH	438	FERGUSON, RECOE	LOU
39	SCHWETZKY, RICK	WIS	149	LOWE, MARTY	LOU	239	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS	239	ANDERSON, CHRIS	AL	239	JONES, JON	WV	439	HOLSTON, HARRISON	FL	439	HILL, AUBREY	FL
40	JACKSON, JOSH	OSU	150	COLQUHITT, JERRY	TECH	240	HILL, GREG	TEAM	240	FREEMAN, JIM	WV	240	LOVE, JIM	WV	440	HARRIS, LEE	FRES	440	SLITSKER, SCOTT	IOWA
			151	BERBERSON, BROOK	NEB	241	DAWSON, RALPH	LOU	241	HILL, JAMES	COX	241	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS	441	JASPER, HAROLD	OVA	441	MURPHY, AMON	VA
			152	CLEMENTS, STEVE	BYU	242	LEVY, CHARLES	AZ	242	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	242	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS	442	JEFFERS, PATRICK	VA	442	CHATELAIN, MARK	PSU
			153	MCCLURE, DEXTER	CLEM	243	HALL, KALIN	BYU	243	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	243	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	443	JORDAN, KEVIN	UCLA	443	CHATELAIN, MARK	PSU
			154	KITCHENS, FREDKIE	AL	244	SMITH, J.J.	KSU	244	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	244	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	444	ROCK, KEVIN	FLA	444	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			155	MCCLURE, RICHARD	CLEM	245	SMITH, J.J.	KSU	245	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	245	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	445	JACKSON, WILLIE	FL	445	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			156	KRESSER, ERIC	FL	246	SHAW, SEDRICK	IOWA	246	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	246	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	446	DOERING, CHRIS	FL	446	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			157	DRUCKENBILDER, JIM	VT	247	SHELMAN, ANTHONY	LOU	247	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	247	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	447	SANDERS, STEVE	VT	447	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			158	MCCLURE, KERRY	CAL	248	BROOKS, KEVIN	VA	248	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	248	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	448	YANOVER, TAMARACK	PSU	448	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			159	YOUNG, TOM	BYU	249	STEWART, JAMES	TEAM	249	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	249	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	449	BRADY, RICKY	OK	449	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			160	BARNES, PAT	CAL					NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	250	NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	450	SMITH, WALTER	UCLA	450	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			161	RYDE, BATT	IOWA					NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL		NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	451	WALTON, LAMON	LOU	451	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			162	JOHNSON, CHAD	WV					NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL		NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	452	COOK, KEVIN	LOU	452	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			163	JOHNSON, CHAD	WV					NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL		NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	453	TOEDER, AMAR	MICH	453	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			164	JOHNSON, CHAD	WV					NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL		NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	454	BROOKS, BUCKY	NC	454	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			165	SOLOMON, LOUIS	CLEM					NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL		NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	455	WILLIAMS, BILLY	TECH	455	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS
			166	PRETSON, TOMMY	TEAM					NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL		NEUMANN, TARRANT	AL	456	MATES, DERRICK	ND	456	MCLENNAN, MARK	WIS

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S P O R T S M E N



Champs: *On the left, the first
to win the World Series
trophy, the first to win
the Vince Lombardi Trophy
in 1972.*

O F T H E Y E A R

e Jay Way

By STEVE BUCKLEY

There always will be some cynics in the back of the sporting classroom who insist on aiming symbolic spitballs at the Toronto Blue Jays. And those spitballs will be purpose pitches, every last one of them, the message being that the

Blue Jays' deep-pocketed ownership simply went out and bought those damned World Series championships, that the Labatt's folks just signed the checks and then stood proudly to the side as a bunch of well-paid Dave Winfields, Dave Stewarts and Jack Morris did what they do best, which is win.

Yet if these cynics checked the history books — or, failing that, the Baseball Encyclopedia — they'd realize how dangerous it is to invest money in baseball flesh. Thomas Yawkey did it for years and never won a World Series. Gene Autry has made many an overrated ballplayer a financially happy fellow, yet none of these fellows has delivered the championship goods. George Steinbrenner's high-priced Yankees have not won a World Series since 1978. The Red Sox sent Lou Gorman out to the store three winters ago to buy a World Series, and he came back with Jack Clark and Matt Young. And you could write a book about the Mets. Another one.

See, it takes more than money. If the wrong people were pressing the buttons up in Toronto, it's possible Clark might have gone broke in a Blue Jays uniform, or maybe we'd have witnessed a tired litany of retread managers such as John McNamara and Pat Corrales trying to get it right in SkyDome. Lucky thing for the Blue Jays and their fans that they have the right people: Pat Gillick, whose job as executive vice president it is to acquire the talent, and Manager Cito Gaston, whose job it is to direct it. It's tough enough to win a World Series, and as baseball whirled through eras of expansion, free agency and, now, parity, it's unthinkable to expect a team to win back-to-back championships; the Blue Jays have done just that, and Gillick and Gaston were the architects of this double-pronged accomplishment. To their growing list of awards and testimonials, we add yet another: Pat Gillick and Cito Gaston are THE SPORTING NEWS' Sportsmen of the Year.

Gillick and Gaston do their work with a diamond cutter's precision. And, like any craftsmen, they prefer to do this work in as much anonymity as big league sports will allow. Ask Gillick what makes

him such a good story, and he blinks his soft eyes and says, "I'm really not a very good story at all." Ask Gaston the same question, and he says, "I shouldn't be the story. The focus should not be on me. The focus should be on the players. I can't remember the last time I struck someone out or got a hit to win a game. Even when a manager is at his best, he's only going to be responsible for as many as 10 wins a season. So if you win it all, that means the players went out and won the other 80 or 90 games."

In Toronto, the sky is the limit with Pat Gillick and Cito Gaston

Before we get to the business of telling you what Pat Gillick and Cito Gaston are all about, it's necessary to throw away all the press clippings and tell you what they are not all about.

Gaston, for instance, is not the cold, above-the-fray, button-presser that some writers would have you believe he is. And Gillick is not some one-dimensional baseball nerd who can give you every stat belonging to every player but cannot humanize this information.

True, Gillick's brain works like one of those old-time, rat-tat-a-tat computers, forever spitting out little three-by-five cards that contain everything a baseball executive needs to know about a certain player. "His recall when it comes to players is scary," says Paul Beeston, the Blue Jays' president and chief executive officer. "But it's not just that he'll know a kid's stats, or whether he's left-handed or right-handed. He'll play word association, and then the whole thing will come back to him. He'll give you the kid's

school, and then the coach's name, and then the parents, and a lot of times he'll even come up with the phone number. You wouldn't believe how many phone numbers he knows off the top of his head."

As for Gaston, a youthful but back-pain-plagued 49, he is the Blue Jays' reluctant field general, a man who was quite happy being the Blue Jays' hitting coach and who never would have taken the manager's job were it not for the simple fact that a lot of his players just came out and asked him to. When this information crossed his plate — that he was wanted not only by the check-signers, but also by the ballplaying masses — he agreed to serve. Call him Lech Walesa with

The winners

A list of the winners of THE SPORTING NEWS' Sportsman of the Year award. The honor has been bestowed every year since 1969, except 1987, when it was withheld.

Year	Winner
1993	Pat Gillick and Cito Gaston
1992	Mike Krzyzewski
1991	Michael Jordan
1990	Noan Ryan
1989	Joe Montana
1988	Jackie Joyner-Kersey
1987	Withheld
1986	Larry Bird
1985	Pete Rose
1984	Peter Ueberroth
1983	Bowie Kuhn
1982	Whitely Herzog
1981	Wayne Gretzky
1980	George Brett
1979	Willie Stargell
1978	Ron Guidry
1977	Steve Cauthen
1976	Larry O'Brien
1975	Archie Griffin
1974	Lou Brock
1973	O.J. Simpson
1972	Charles O. Finley
1971	Lee Trevino
1970	John Wooden
1969	Tom Seaver
1968	Denny McLain

SPORTSMEN OF THE YEAR

The others

The Toronto Blue Jays pulled off a couple of double plays this year. They won the World Series for the second successive season, the first time that has been accomplished since the Yankees did it in 1977 and '78. And Pat Gillick's and Cito Gaston's performances persuaded us to honor them both as THE SPORTING NEWS Sportsmen of the Year.

The honor is the only annual TSN award that is selected (by staff editors), not elected (by peers or blue-ribbon panels). Here are some of the other candidates (in alphabetical order) who were considered this year.



Jimmy Johnson and Jerry Jones.

The objects of ridicule when they came into the league together in 1989 and rang up a 1-15 first season, the Cowboys' coach and owner have had the last laugh. Through a series of shrewd trades and drafts, they returned the Cowboys to the top of the NFL in only four seasons.



Mario Lemieux.

Despite missing 20 games while undergoing treatment for Hodgkin's disease, he scored 69 goals and led the NHL with 160 points as the Penguins recorded a team-record 119

points in the 1992-93 season. But he has been plagued by recurring back problems, having played in four games this season.



Don Shula.

He became the winningest coach in NFL history November 14 when the Dolphins defeated the Eagles, 19-14, for his 325th career victory. But perhaps a more fitting

tribute to Shula's impact in '93 is that his Miami team has lost not one, but two quarterbacks and yet still is in the thick of the AFC East race.

Ernest Smith.

He won his second successive NFL rushing title (1,713 yards) in a season that ended with the Cowboys' 52-17 victory over Buffalo in Super Bowl XXVII, in which he ran for 108

yards. Despite having held out the first two games this season (both Cowboys losses), he is in position to win a third consecutive rushing title, something that hasn't been accomplished since Walter Payton won five in a row from 1976 to '80.



a lineup card.

During his days as a hitting coach, Gaston's trademark was the cruel pleasure he seemed to derive from working his hitters to the point where their hands literally bled. He speaks the words of a proud papa when he talks of the work he has done with the likes of Kelly Gruber, Cecil Fielder and Fred McGriff. "Those two — Cecil and Fred — used to complain about me," Gaston says. "I could see it in their eyes, when I'd be out there with them at 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon." And, like a down-trodden papa who still wonders where he went wrong, he sings bluesy songs of not being able to breathe life back into the gasping career of Willie Mays Aikens. "He was successful once," Gaston says, "but then the pitchers made adjustments with him, as pitchers will do. Now it was up to him to relearn some things, and he never did. He'd always say, 'Cito, give me another week,' but we finally ran out of weeks with him. I don't take it personally, but I feel bad, because he could still be playing somewhere."

Despite leading the Blue Jays to four division titles and two World Series championships, Gaston has not been named American League manager of the year. Ask him if he cares about this, and he'll tell you that, no, he does not. Look into the man's eyes and those eyes will tell you that, yes, he does.

"People just don't know me, I guess," he says. "Maybe if they did..." His voice, soft to begin with, falls off a cliff. He does not complete the answer. As for those charges that Gaston is cold and emotionless, listen to Blue Jays designated hitter Paul Molitor: "I think he just opens up to people he feels close to. When I came to the team last year, I didn't know him very well. But we had become close by the end of spring training. He's a man I care very much about."

Cito Gaston, lacking in emotion? Rewind the tape to October 24, 1992. Otis Nixon has just dropped a bunt to the right side of the infield; Mike Timlin gloves the ball and fires a strike to first baseman Joe Carter. Otis Nixon is out. The Blue Jays have won the World Series. It was at this point that Blue Jays coach Gene Tenace turned to Gaston and hugged the man, picked him right up off the ground and held him, squeezed him so hard that his back screamed.

"He held me up for a couple of seconds," Gaston says, "and while my feet were off the ground, I looked out on the field, and do you know what I saw? I saw Ernie Whitt and Jim Clancy and Lloyd Moseby. Damaso Garcia. Willie Upshaw. I saw all the players who had tried and failed to get us to the World Series. Those guys had helped make it happen, and for a couple of seconds I could see them out on the field celebrating with us, even though they weren't there. And I started to cry."

Um, yeah, this guy is as cold as steel. No emotions. No feelings. Right.

"Cito is good because he is so consistent with the players," Gillick says. "(Toronto) is a place where people care about people, and Cito fits right in with that. . . . He really believes in building a guy's confidence, so maybe he lets a guy go up and hit when it looks to you like he should pinch-hit. Maybe the guy makes an out in April, but that vote of confidence means the same guy delivers a hit in September."

"One reason he's so good is that he doesn't over-manage," says Rich Hacker, the Blue Jays' third-base coach until being injured in an automobile accident last year. "He gives the players a framework and lets them play within it. He will also take the onus of our mistakes. Sometimes I would miss a sign, but Cito would take the blame for whatever happened. We love working for that man."

Nick Leyva replaced Hacker as the third-base coach right after the All-Star break, and he says Gaston made an immediate impression. Gaston had elected not to pitch Baltimore ace Mike Mussina at the end of the All-Star Game, which was at Camden Yards. Fans there had been outraged, despite Mussina's later statement that he had been wrong for getting up in the bullpen and giving the appearance that he might pitch. "The first day back after the All-Star Game, they had a meeting here, and it was my first day," Leyva says. "Cito had been given a really hard time because of the Mussina stuff, and the fans were all over him. The players said, 'Look, our



"There isn't a manager in baseball who doesn't have the utmost respect for Cito. You can say, 'Oh, sure, he has the talent.' But if you have the history books, you'll find a lot of managers who have the talent and didn't use it right."

—Pittsburgh Manager Jim Leyland



Now and then: Gaston broke in with the Padres and in 1970 had his best season: 29 home runs, 93 RBIs and a .318 average.

slopper got embarrassed up there, and we can't ever let that happen again. He can't be embarrassed because of us. We have a job to do. When I heard that, I knew this was going to be fun."

Pat Gillick is 56 years old, a baseball lifer whose fastball took him on a rocky minor league ride to such ports as Little Rock, Elmira and Fox Cities. The arm went dead in 1963, when he was pitching for Earl Weaver, so he took the business degree he had earned from the University of Southern California and aimed it at the management end of baseball.

He had already worked for the Astros and Yankees when, in 1976, the newly formed Toronto Blue Jays brought him in to run their baseball operations. For a young baseball man whose pockets were overflowing with ideas, it was a dream come true: Here was a chance to sit at the potter's wheel and create something. As longtime manager Gene Mauch once said, "The best thing about

being with an expansion team is that you don't have any dead weight. When I took over the Phillies in the early '60s, we had to tear apart the team before we could build it. When I took over the Expos in '69, it was easy. We didn't have to tear anything apart before we did our building."

And so it was with Pat Gillick and his Blue Jays. He astutely recognized that a handful of dreary, losing seasons would be necessary while the Blue Jays of Tomorrow were being assembled in the minor leagues, and he never buckled when the Jays averaged 103 losses their first four seasons.

"When people want to talk about Pat Gillick's success," Beeston says, "they shouldn't waste their time talking about the two World Series championships. They should talk about those first four seasons. Pat's greatest accomplishment is coming in here with a plan, and having the courage to never back down from that plan."

In 1982, when a collection of George Bells, Jesse Barfields, Lloyd Mosebys and Dave Stiebs led the Blue Jays to a 78-84 record, it was clear that Gillick's plan was working. The Blue Jays were coming together. He had put together a solid scouting department, which was finding players everywhere, and he had developed a skill for stealing promising young players that had been left unprotected by other teams, which is how the Jays acquired Bell, Gruber and Manny Lee.

But while the Blue Jays won division titles in '85, '89 and '91 and came close in '87, '88 and '90, there seemed to be something missing. Some of Gillick's acquisitions had talent but lacked whatever it is that separates winners from watchers. "So we began to look at things differently," Gillick says. "We began to look for certain qualities in players that we might not have looked for before."

When Gillick made his now-famous trade with San Diego in 1990 in which Fred McGriff and Tony Fernandez were sent to the Padres for Joe Carter and Roberto Alomar, he was as much interested in the heart and soul of Carter and Alomar as he was their bats and gloves. He decided he needed an aging warhorse to spark the offense, and so it was that Dave Winfield arrived.

Even after the Jays won the World Series in 1992, Gillick looked into rebuilding the team. And so it was that Paul Molitor and Dave Stewart, two classy veterans, were added to the 1993 roster.

In 17 years, Gillick and Beeston have had only one major disagreement on a baseball decision, and the disagreement stands as

evidence that Gillick is perfectly willing to be as cagey with his boss as he is with rival general managers.

On December 18, 1991, when the Blue Jays signed free agent Jack Morris, it was understood that the Blue Jays were done signing new players. "We had reached our budget cap," Beeston says. "Pat was on vacation at the Virgin Islands when we closed the Jack Morris deal, and he called me and said we had a chance to get Dave Winfield for one year. I told him to forget it, that we couldn't do it."

According to both men, the conversation went something like this:

Gillick: "I want you to call Jeff Klein, Winfield's agent."
Beeston: "I'm not going to call him."
Gillick: "Just talk with him."
Beeston: "No, it's a waste of time."

Beeston, angry, hung up the phone. Five minutes later the private line in his office rang — the private line whose number is a closely guarded secret. Beeston picked up the phone. It was Jeff Klein, who said to Beeston, "Pat Gillick says you want to talk with me."

Later that night, Gillick was changing planes in Atlanta when he placed a call to his home to check in. "The phone is ringing off the hook," his daughter said. "Everyone is calling to ask about Dave Winfield."

"You mean Jack Morris," Gillick said.
"No," his daughter said, "Dave Winfield."

Gillick could not get through to Beeston. He placed a call to the sports department of the Toronto Sun, and, disguising his voice, asked if the Blue Jays had signed Winfield. They had — for one season.

"Pat wouldn't take no for an answer," Beeston says. "He put Jeff Klein in touch with me, and we were able to work out a deal in five minutes."

ito Gaston is not sure how long he will remain manager of the Blue Jays. The Jays are on the verge of extending his contract through 1996, which means security for Gaston and his family, but he does not see himself as some modern-day Casey Stengel, guiding his team to a decade of champagne.

"It will not be my life," he says. "I will do other things. I love

baseball. I love my players. I really do. But I will walk away from this at some point in my life."

Again, while he says he does not mind the criticism, that he doesn't mind the slights from the writers who vote for manager of the year, it clearly does bother him. It bothered him during the World Series that some of the big-shot national writers criticized his managing. It bothered him that CBS baseball analyst Tim McCarver criticized the manner in which he handled his pitchers.

"I'm sick and tired of taking grief from Tim McCarver," Gaston says. "He walks into my office all smiles before the game, and then he's up there in that booth ripping me. Hey, if he walked in here right now, I'd talk to him, but I don't have much respect for him. I guess he hasn't forgotten that I once told him I was going to kick his ass. It was during a game. This guy threw behind my head, and I looked down at him and told him I'd kick his ass. I guess it's still on his mind."

Pat Gillick? He will walk, probably at the end of the 1994 season. His life has had too many road trips in it, too many late-night phone calls, too many missed meals at home. Beeston says, "I'll believe Pat Gillick is leaving when I see it," but Gillick is not backing down: "No, this will be it. I want to win a third World Series and then step down."

Yet Gillick is not without his fantasies. He has lived in Toronto for years, and he has acquired an appreciation for hockey. He cannot understand why there are not more blacks in professional hockey.

"I know this sounds weird," Gillick says, "but my fantasy is to bring hockey to inner-city black kids. And I'm totally serious when I say this. I know it's an economic thing, but why hasn't somebody in hockey who has the money gone into the inner city and invested in a hockey program? Maybe I'll never do it, but it's something I think about all the time."

We called Paul Molitor. We told Molitor about Gillick's plan to bring hockey to inner-city kids. We expected Molitor to laugh. He did not laugh.

"It doesn't surprise me in the least that he would be thinking of something like that," Molitor said. "That's his genius talking, and you have to take that seriously."

Steve Buckley is a free-lance writer from Boston



Man with the plan: Says Beeston (left) of Gillick: "Pat's greatest accomplishment is coming in here with a plan and having the courage to never back down from that plan."

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Heavenly Hash or Rocky Road?

For the Oilers, the current AFC team of the week, and the other conference leaders, only time will tell

By PAUL ATTNER

So my boss says, go find the best team in the AFC. I protest. Anything but that. How about solutions to the national debt or insight on the meaning of life? But he insists. After all, the NFC does have to play *somebody* in the Super Bowl.

So I ask, do you mean you want the best of the Baskin-Robbins conference? The one with the team of the week? Let's review: one week Cleveland might look terrific, then maybe Kansas City. Or Miami. Or Pittsburgh. Depends on the date, record and latest winning streak. Seems like everyone but Cincinnati and New England has made a run at the top. Get the idea maybe no one wants to wind up in Atlanta at the end of January?

"It's frustrating when you know you won't be in the playoffs," says Indianapolis General Manager Jim Irsay, whose club will be sitting out in January, "because you feel you have a shot at anyone this year. That's how roller coaster the conference has been."

So I get on the phone and make some calls. All the time I am hoping that the answer to my boss' question won't be *Buffffffff* . . . I just can't write it. Is America ready for *Buffffffff* . . . playing in another Super Bowl? Is life fair?

Fortunately, the underwhelming winner of my poll was — the card please — Houston. Considering the Oilers have won nine in a row, it really wasn't a wild and crazy choice. But at the same time, I know taking Houston is almost as troubling as giving the nod to

Buffffffff . . . but hey, someone has to be No. 1, even if it is the underachieving, overrated, let's-blow-it-in-the-playoffs Oilers. Can't you see those NFC folks trembling now?

"I'd have to go with Houston," says Irsay after much hemming and hawing. "Their offense is playing awfully well, and right now they have the hottest team. But with their past performances in the playoffs and their inconsistency and their slow start this season, they are going to have to prove themselves each week once the playoffs begin."

Which is a kind way of saying the Oilers, no matter how many games they win in a row, won't prove much to anyone until they can demonstrate an ability to handle playoff pressure. Ah, the memories: a 21-6 first-half lead against Denver in a second-round game two years ago that became a 26-24 loss and a 35-3 third-quarter advantage against *Buffffffff* . . . last season that turned into a 41-38 wild-card embarrassment. That's the one that almost got Coach Jack Pardee into the unemployment line and did lead to the dismissal of defensive coordinator Jim Eddy and the arrival of Mr. Warmth, Buddy Ryan. Problem is, they kept the run-and-shoot offense, which is hardly a playoff success. Not even a few changes can chase away the ghosts of embarrassing failures.

Or chase away memories of September and a 1-4 start and the controversy of the week and how Pardee's job once again seemed in trouble and how Ryan and offensive coordinator Kevin Gilbride took verbal shots at each other. Team Turmoil at its finest. Not a way to build credibility.

"Yeah, it seems that no matter who we beat, we always hear, 'Well, next week we will find out how good you are,'" says defensive tackle Ray Childress, who fully recognizes Houston's reputation problems. And that won't change even after the Oilers won last Sunday in Three Rivers Stadium for the first time since 1989, knocking off the Steelers, 26-17, to clinch the AFC Central title with a sparkling 6-0 division record. And the Oilers did it despite the death of reserve defensive tackle Jeff Alm, who killed himself earlier in the week after a car accident in which his best friend died. Houston showed the kind of intestinal fortitude it had lacked in the past, and that could be a first step toward ending the self-destruction process.

Still, the Oilers haven't even secured home-field advantage for the playoffs. And now they have to play in San Francisco on Christmas, which can be viewed in two ways: a potential Super Bowl matchup or yet another opportunity for the AFC to prove it has no chance come Super Bowl time. But if Houston loses to the 49ers, it's likely home-field advantage will also be gone, leaving Kansas City or — oh, no — *Buffffffff* . . . on top. How would you like the Oilers' chances in the conference championship game if it's played in Arrowhead or Rich Stadium instead of the comfy, cozy, climate-controlled Astrodome?

Arrowhead or Rich Stadium instead of the comfy, cozy, climate-controlled Astrodome?

"If we can come in and show we can play with the 49ers, we can show we can get to the Super Bowl," receiver Haywood Jeffires says. "I'm looking forward to playing them. How can any offense handle our defense? And they don't match up well against our offense. I don't think they like to play against the run-and-shoot. It gives us an advantage."

Yeah, just like *Buffffffff* . . . 's no-huddle was supposed to provide an advantage in the past three Super Bowls. Some edge. Three losses, by a total score of 109-60. But when you have put together a lengthy winning streak, as quarterback Warren Moon says, "it gives rise to a growing confidence. We feel more comfortable with ourselves every week."

That comfort level doesn't extend much beyond the confines of Houston. I hung up with Irsay and called out to the West Coast, the land of clear thinking. Surely now I will find a definitive answer.

"Best team? Well, Houston has the best talent," replied Mike Allman, Seattle's player personnel director. Another hedge. "I know I don't sound convincing, but every week someone else seems to be the best team. Houston's the hottest now, so you have to go with them. But are they much better than everyone else? No. Heck, there isn't one team in the whole league that stands out and tells you, I will win it all. Not one."

Then Allman reiterates a point Irsay emphasized. "You can't say enough this season



Big play, big game: For Don Beebe and the Bills, Sunday's victory over the Dolphins means the AFC East title is now within reach.

about needing home-field advantage. It's important every year, but this year, I don't think it has ever been as important. With the run-and-shoot, the Oilers are much more effective at home, without worrying about the wind or snow or rain. It's a big difference than having to go into Kansas City or Buffalo. Those are two of the toughest places to play in the whole league."

So let's stop for a moment and look at the remaining schedules of the three AFC teams with 10 victories. The Oilers finish with San Francisco and home against the Jets, who are 5-1 on the road this season. Kansas City ends at Minnesota and home against Seattle. And Bufffuffff... concludes at Rich Stadium against the Jets and at Indianapolis. Slight edge — and this one really hurts — goes to Bufffuffff...

So, I figure maybe someone in the NFC has a handle on this AFC confusion. "Winning in the playoffs is like precious gold," Redskins General Manager Charley Casserly says. "They have it, and that makes them a dangerous team."

"They," of course — OK, I've got to deal with this — is Buffalo. There, I wrote it. "I'd fear them," says Casserly about the team his Redskins drubbed, 37-24, in the 1992 Super Bowl. "But Houston has excellent talent. They are on a roll. That's enough to give them the edge, for today. Check with me next week. It could change. And remember, Montana has that playoff gold, too."

How could we forget? Joe Montana. The great potential equalizer in this whole AFC scramble. At 37, he has shown enough in his first season with the Chiefs to give them the playoff credibility that Coach Marty Schottenheimer has not been able to gain. Until somebody proves otherwise, Montana's presence represents a mystic edge that no other conference opponent enjoys. You just don't underestimate a Legend until he can no longer produce.

"With him in there, they have a chance to beat anyone," Casserly says. "He's the unknown factor. Houston has better talent, and Kansas City hasn't had any success in the playoffs. But they also didn't have Montana or Marcus Allen. But don't forget Buffalo. They are playing the best defense they've ever played, better than any of the Super Bowl teams."

Say what? Buffalo and defense in the same sentence? But look at what the Bills did to unsuspecting Miami on Sunday. The Dolphins have gone from the best of the bunch to a possible wild-card club in three weeks, ending with a 47-34 trouncing at the hands of Buffalo at Joe Robbie Stadium. That Bills defense forced five turnovers, turning two into immediate touchdowns. Miami gave it away four times in a 13-minute span during which Buffalo outscored the Dolphins, 38-3.

Is this the start of a Buffalo wake-up call? After all, these same Bills barely beat the mediocre Eagles the previous week, although we should never forget Philadelphia is an NFC club. Buffalo's offense has stumbled all season, bogged down with inconsistency and injuries to Jim Kelly, Thurman Thomas and Andre Reed. But just think of the nightmarish possibilities if that offense begins playing at the same level as the defense?

"Buffalo's health is somewhat of a concern," Irsay says. "But if they all get healthy for January, they will be extremely dangerous. Still, you got to look at Houston."

Wait a second. Before we do that, let's give equal time to Wade Phillips, Denver's first-year coach. "I still like our chances," says Phillips, whose club likely will be a wild-card entry. "You look at all the teams that are still in it, and we've probably been the most consistent. We don't have the best record, but we could have won all of our games. Everyone else has been blown out at one time or another. We're the only team that hasn't been."

And if Phillips somehow could lure clubs into Mile High Stadium next month and let them deal with John Elway and a fast-improving offensive line and a decent running game and a defense that isn't all that worse than the rest of the contenders — defense is not an AFC staple — we could have the Broncos back in a Super Bowl. Which is like contemplating another return trip for Buffalo.

Which brings us back to our flavor of the week, Houston. This may be a one-shot deal for the Oilers. You see, that Master of Defense, the grouchy Mr. Ryan, already has said he doubts he will be back next year. Buddy wants a head coaching job, and that means the Oilers likely need a Super Bowl triumph, so you know he will be driving his unit hard these next few weeks. His future is at stake.

This defensive group is playing better, now that the players have figured out his complex teachings. "You could see they were a step behind earlier in the season," Moon says. "But now they are right on time. I wouldn't want to be playing them."

Same old Buddy defense, Pittsburgh quarterback Mike Tomczak says. "Feast or famine," Tomczak says. "They fly around, create havoc, gamble and make big plays. They've got a great mixture on

their defense right now."

The Steelers turned it over three times against Ryan's boys, including a Neil O'Donnell interception that was returned for a touchdown and a 14-0 lead by safety Bo Orlando. That gives Houston 30 takeaways during the winning streak, compared with eight in the first five games. The Oilers' six defensive touchdowns lead the league. But with one starting safety, Marcus Robertson, already out for the season with a bad knee and another, Bubba McDowell, hobbling with a tendon injury suffered against the Steelers, Ryan's depth is being stretched.

But at least he has some leaders who can keep the sky from falling. Newcomer Wilber Marshall, obtained in a trade with Washington, and end Sean Jones are providing the kind of verbal prodding

"Houston has excellent talent."

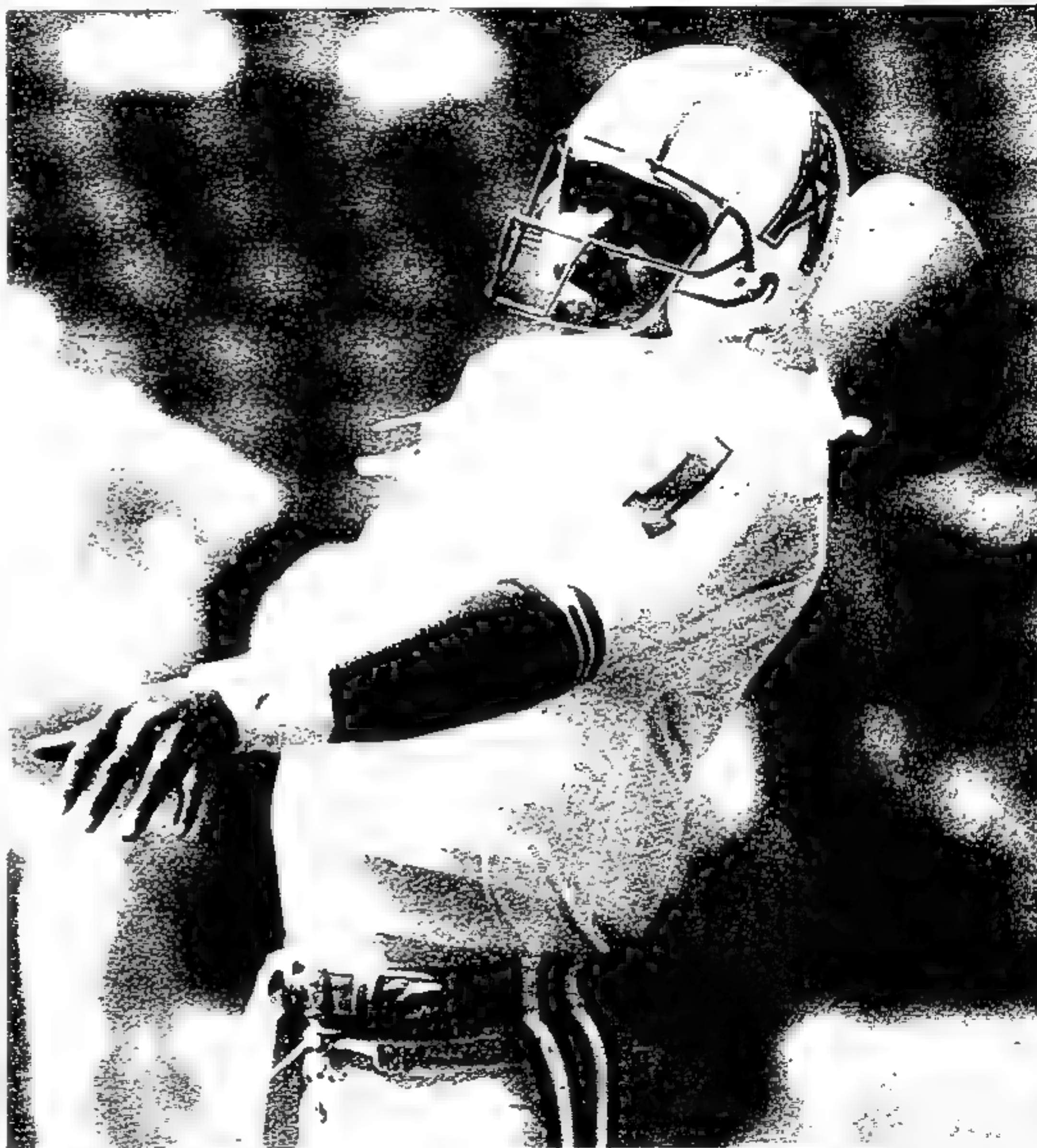
"They are on a roll. That's

enough to give them the edge.

for today. Check with me

next week. It could change."

—Washington's Charley Casserly



One up, one down: Moon (above) threw for 268 yards and a touchdown. O'Donnell, sacked by Sean Jones, had a rough afternoon. One of his passes was intercepted and returned for a touchdown. The Oilers had six sacks.

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Pride and honor

In the locker room, there was lots of cheering and clapping. The Oilers were undergoing an emotional release, fueled in part by a victory that wrapped up a division title and in part by tensions generated by human tragedy. In the midst of it all were thoughts of Jeff Alm.

Alm, a backup defensive tackle, killed himself last Tuesday following a traffic accident in which his best friend, Sean Lynch, was thrown from Alm's car along a Houston freeway on-ramp and died. Alm, 25, apparently saw that Lynch was not alive, went back to his car, pulled out a shotgun and pulled the trigger.

"Jeff was with us during the game," said receiver Haywood Jeffries after Houston beat Pittsburgh on Sunday at Three Rivers Stadium to win the AFC Central title. "He realizes that he had a hand in the win. We all do." To show it, the Oilers awarded Alm's parents game balls.

In a week that Jack Pardee called his most difficult as a coach, the Oilers dealt with Alm's death head-on. The club brought in religious counselors, and the players, as defensive end Sean Jones put it, "asked questions and didn't shy away from what happened. We didn't go through the five stages of dealing with death. Our mourning had its place, but we also had to deal with this game and we did."

The Oilers have kept Alm's home locker undisturbed, and they are wearing decals on their helmets with his number. Before the Steelers game, there was a moment of silence in Alm's honor.

—PAUL ATTNER

the Oilers lacked in the past, particularly in difficult times.

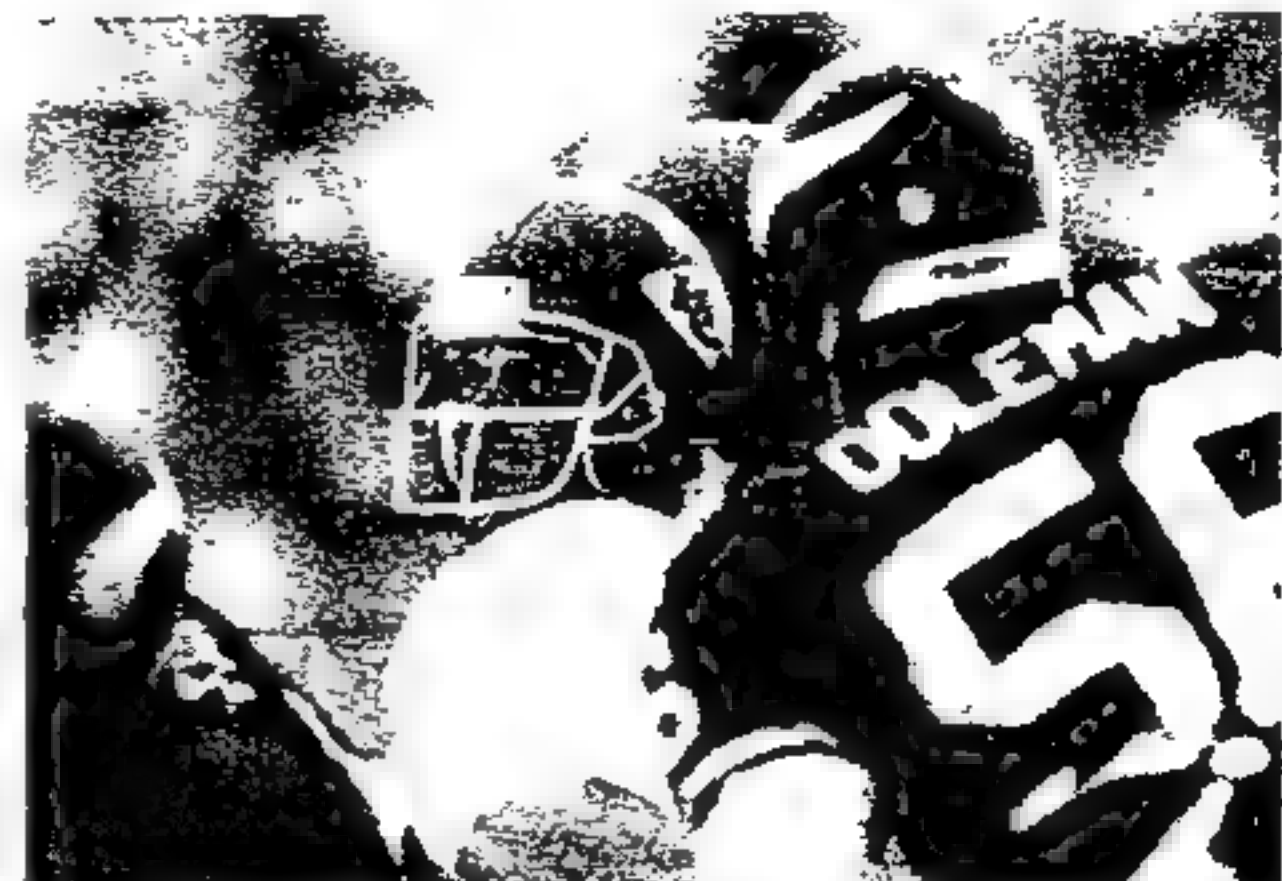
"We got most of the same guys here that were here last year," Jones says. "But we are closer. We had to get that way, because at 1-4, you had no one left but yourselves. We had to feed off each other. Winning the division after what we've been through makes it so, so sweet. Lot of people today are having problems getting their feet — and I do mean feet — out of their mouth when they try to talk about us."

Still, the Oilers have one of the league's most vulnerable pass defenses, which surrendered 305 yards to Cleveland's Vinny Testaverde two weeks ago. If opponents can keep Houston's very good pass rush away from their quarterback, it opens up all types of offensive possibilities, no matter what schemes Ryan dreams up.

And what of the run-and-shoot? Houston had a comfortable 23-3 lead against the Steelers before again showing an inability to wind down the clock or keep away from mistakes. Jeffries protested that the victory shouldn't be diminished by these failures, but it is of such things playoff losses are built. The Oilers made this painful discovery against Buffalo last January. But even though running back Gary Brown is playing splendidly in place of the injured Lorenzo White — Brown gained 100 yards on the Steelers, his fourth 100-yard game in the past six weeks — Houston still relies far too much on Moon's passing to keep advancing the ball in the fourth quarter. Moon is trying to adjust by putting chains on his gambling instincts.

"I came into this game determined not to make turnovers," he said after the Steelers contest, in which he had no interceptions. "I wanted to throw a lot of short passes and not take a lot of chances. I figured if we didn't make mistakes, we would win."

In the first five games, Moon had 11 interceptions, which led to his benching in game No. 6 against New England. But backup Cody Carlson was hurt in that game, and Moon since has made only seven mistakes. As he has become more efficient, the Oilers have become more protective. They are settling for field goals instead of forcing plays that could result in touchdowns or turnovers. The result: Al Del Greco already has set a team field-goal record, now at 27. He has kicked 12 in the past three weeks, including four against Pittsburgh. This lack of efficiency near the goal line keeps foes from getting blown out, which could hurt the Oilers in the playoffs.



Chief threat: K.C. is no ordinary Joe with Montana at quarterback.

Still, Houston really is about where most people predicted the Oilers would be when the season started. "We just had our lull early in the season instead of someplace else," Moon says. They also took great advantage of an easy midseason schedule, which allowed them to beat up on the likes of Cincinnati (twice), Cleveland (twice), Atlanta and Seattle. Indeed, their two victories over Pittsburgh are their only ones against a team with a winning record during the streak.

"We just weren't ready for the league season when it began," says Pardee about the Oilers' dramatic turnaround. "We had a new defensive scheme, and our offensive line was scrambling around. We had Marshall hurt. And we had tough opponents at the start. But we've gradually gotten to where we should have been from the beginning."

Now, can the Oilers wind up where they think they should finish, in the Super Bowl? Or are they just another AFC Baskin-Robbins flavor, ready to melt away?

Paul Attner is a senior writer for THE SPORTING NEWS.

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Scoring Highlights

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OFFENSE	DEFENSE	TEAMS	TEAMS
Touchdown: 6 pts.	0-10 = 0 pts.	0-10 = 0 pts.	0-10 = 0 pts.
Interception: -2 pts.	11-20 = 1 pt.	21-30 = 2 pts.	31-40 = 3 pts.
Safety: 2 pts.	21-30 = 2 pts.	31-40 = 3 pts.	41-50 = 4 pts.
	31-40 = 3 pts.	41-50 = 4 pts.	51-60 = 5 pts.
	41-50 = 4 pts.	51-60 = 5 pts.	61-70 = 6 pts.
	51-60 = 5 pts.	61-70 = 6 pts.	71-80 = 7 pts.
	61-70 = 6 pts.	71-80 = 7 pts.	81-90 = 8 pts.
	71-80 = 7 pts.	81-90 = 8 pts.	91-100 = 9 pts.
	81-90 = 8 pts.	91-100 = 9 pts.	101-110 = 10 pts.
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	1191-1200 = 119 pts.	1201-1210 = 120 pts.	1211-1220 = 121 pts.
	1201-1210 = 120 pts.	1211-1220 = 121 pts.	1221-1230 = 122 pts.
	1211-1220 = 121 pts.	1221-1230 = 122 pts.	1231-1240 = 123 pts.
	1221-1230 = 122 pts.	1231-1240 = 123 pts.	1241-1250 = 124 pts.
	1231-1240 = 123 pts.	1241-1250 = 124 pts.	1251-1260 = 125 pts.
	1241-1250 = 124 pts.	1251-1260 = 125 pts.	1261-1270 = 126 pts.
	1251-1260 = 125 pts.	1261-1270 = 126 pts.	1271-1280 = 127 pts.
	1261-1270 = 126 pts.	1271-1280 = 127 pts.	1281-1290 = 128 pts.
	1271-1280 = 127 pts.	1281-1290 = 128 pts.	1291-1300 = 129 pts.
	1281-1290 = 128 pts.	1291-1300 = 129 pts.	1301-1310 = 130 pts.
	1291-1300 = 129 pts.	1301-1310 = 130 pts.	1311-1320 = 131 pts.
	1301-1310 = 130 pts.	1311-1320 = 131 pts.	1321-1330 = 132 pts.
	1311-1320 = 131 pts.	1321-1330 = 132 pts.	1331-1340 = 133 pts.
	1321-1330 = 132 pts.	1331-1340 = 133 pts.	1341-1350 = 134 pts.
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	1341-1350 = 134 pts.	1351-1360 = 135 pts.	1361-1370 = 136 pts.
	1351-1360 = 135 pts.	1361-1370 = 136 pts.	1371-1380 = 137 pts.
	1361-1370 = 136 pts.	1371-1380 = 137 pts.	1381-1390 = 138 pts.
	1371-1380 = 137 pts.	1381-1390 = 138 pts.	1391-1400 = 139 pts.
	1381-1390 = 138 pts.	1391-1400 = 139 pts.	1401-1410 = 140 pts.
	1391-1400 = 139 pts.	1401-1410 = 140 pts.	1411-1420 = 141 pts.
	1401-1410 = 140 pts.	1411-1420 = 141 pts.	1421-1430 = 142 pts.
	1411-1420 = 141 pts.	1421-1430 = 142 pts.	1431-1440 = 143 pts.
	1421-1430 = 142 pts.	1431-1440 = 143 pts.	1441-1450 = 144 pts.
	1431-1440 = 143 pts.	1441-1450 = 144 pts.	1451-1460 = 145 pts.
	1441-1450 = 144 pts.	1451-1460 = 145 pts.	1461-1470 = 146 pts.
	1451-1460 = 145 pts.	1461-1470 = 146 pts.	1471-1480 = 147 pts.
	1461-1470 = 146 pts.	1471-1480 = 147 pts.	1481-1490 = 148 pts.
	1471-1480 = 147 pts.	1481-1490 = 148 pts.	1491-1500 = 149 pts.
	1481-1490 = 148 pts.	1491-1500 = 149 pts.	1501-1510 = 150 pts.
	1491-1500 = 149 pts.	1501-1510 = 150 pts.	1511-1520 = 151 pts.
	1501-1510 = 150 pts.	1511-1520 = 151 pts.	1521-1530 = 152 pts.
	1511-1520 = 151 pts.	1521-1530 = 152 pts.	1531-1540 = 153 pts.
	1521-1530 = 152 pts.	1531-1540 = 153 pts.	1541-1550 = 154 pts.
	1531-1540 = 153 pts.	1541-1550 = 154 pts.	1551-1560 = 155 pts.
	1541-1550 = 154 pts.	1551-1560 = 155 pts.	1561-1570 = 156 pts.
	1551-1560 = 155 pts.	1561-1570 = 156 pts.	1571-1580 = 157 pts.
	1561-1570 = 156 pts.	1571-1580 = 157 pts.	1581-1590 = 158 pts.
	1571-1580 = 157 pts.	1581-1590 = 158 pts.	1591-1600 = 159 pts.
	1581-1590 = 158 pts.	1591-1600 = 159 pts.	1601-1610 = 160 pts.
	1591-1600 = 159 pts.	1601-1610 = 160 pts.	1611-1620 = 161 pts.
	1601-1610 = 160 pts.	1611-1620 = 161 pts.	1621-1630 = 162 pts.
	1611-1620 = 161 pts.	1621-1630 = 162 pts.	1631-1640 = 163 pts.
	1621-1630 = 162 pts.	1631-1640 = 163 pts.	1641-1650 = 164 pts.
	1631-1640 = 163 pts.	1641-1650 = 164 pts.	1651-1660 = 165 pts.
	1641-1650 = 164 pts.	1651-1660 = 165 pts.	1661-1670 = 166 pts.
	1651-1660 = 165 pts.	1661-1670 = 166 pts.	1671-1680 = 167 pts.
	1661-1670 = 166 pts.	1671-1680 = 167 pts.	1681-1690 = 168 pts.
	1671-1680 = 167 pts.	1681-1690 = 168 pts.	1691-1700 = 169 pts.
	1681-1690 = 168 pts.	1691-1700 = 169 pts.	1701-1710 = 170 pts.
	1691-1700 = 169 pts.	1701-1710 = 170 pts.	1711-1720 = 171 pts.
	1701-1710 = 170 pts.	1711-1720 = 171 pts.	1721-1730 = 172 pts.
	1711-1720 = 171 pts.	1721-1730 = 172 pts.	1731-1740 = 173 pts.
	1721-1730 = 172 pts.	1731-1740 = 173 pts.	1741-1750 = 174 pts.
	1731-1740 = 173 pts.	1741-1750 = 174 pts.	1751-1760 = 175 pts.
	1741-1750 = 174 pts.	1751-1760 = 175 pts.	1761-1770 = 176 pts.
	1751-1760 = 175 pts.	1761-1770 = 176 pts.	1771-1780 = 177 pts.
	1761-1770 = 176 pts.	1771-1780 = 177 pts.	1781-1790 = 178 pts.
	1771-1780 = 177 pts.	1781-1790 = 178 pts.	1791-1800 = 179 pts.
	1781-1790 = 178 pts.	1791-1800 = 179 pts.	1801-1810 = 180 pts.
	1791-1800 = 179 pts.	1801-1810 = 180 pts.	1811-1820 = 181 pts.
	1801-1810 = 180 pts.	1811-1820 = 181 pts.	1821-1830 = 182 pts.
	1811-1820 = 181 pts.	1821-1830 = 182 pts.	1831-1840 = 183 pts.
	1821-1830 = 182 pts.	1831-1840 = 183 pts.	1841-1850 = 184 pts.
	1831-1840 = 183 pts.	1841-1850 = 184 pts.	1851-1860 = 185 pts.
	1841-1850 = 184 pts.	1851-1860 = 185 pts.	1861-1870 = 186 pts.
	1851-1860 = 185 pts.	1861-1870 = 186 pts.	1871-1880 = 187 pts.
	1861-1870 = 186 pts.	1871-1880 = 187 pts.	1881-1890 = 188 pts.
	1871-1880 = 187 pts.	1881-1890 = 188 pts.	1891-1900 = 189 pts.
	1881-1890 = 188 pts.	1891-1900 = 189 pts.	1901-1910 = 190 pts.
	1891-1900 = 189 pts.	1901-1910 = 190 pts.	1911-1920 = 191 pts.
	1901-1910 = 190 pts.	1911-1920 = 191 pts.	1921-1930 = 192 pts.
	1911-1920 = 191 pts.	1921-1930 = 192 pts.	1931-1940 = 193 pts.
	1921-1930 = 192 pts.	1931-1940 = 193 pts.	1941-1950 = 194 pts.
	1931-1940 = 193 pts.	1941-1950 = 194 pts.	1951-1960 = 195 pts.
	1941-1950 = 194 pts.	1951-1960 = 195 pts.	1961-1970 = 196 pts.
	1951-1960 = 195 pts.	1961-1970 = 196 pts.	1971-1980 = 197 pts.
	1961-1970 = 196 pts.	1971-1980 =	

NFL REPORT

Loyalty is weeded out in the NFL's greenhouse



Chris
MORTENSEN

Really, the deal is staggering. Just ask CBS, which was blindsided last week when the NFL awarded its NFC package for the next four years to the Fox Television Network. CBS never saw it coming.

Fox was a player, sure. Everybody knew that. Only nobody knew it would win the game. At first, the news leaked that Fox had offered \$100 million more than CBS for the NFC package. That was unimpressive. Then it became evident that it was \$100 million more per year.

The NFL grabbed Rupert Murdoch's money and ran. Waved bye-bye to CBS. Loy-

alty has its limits, obviously.

If CBS felt blindsided by Fox, it was because network officials were led to believe that if they just raised their previous bid by a few dollars, everything would be fine. CBS did that, adding \$38 million to its previous \$1.06 billion commitment. CBS felt secure. It was not.

We should have expected no less in 1993. Dallas Owner Jerry Jones, a member of the NFL broadcast committee who personally courted Murdoch, paid \$140 million for his franchise in 1989, not the \$4 million to \$8 million that some of the more established owners paid for their clubs.

The new-breed owner of the NFL is interested only in the bottom line. The bottom line: The league that generated a whopping \$3.65-billion TV package four years ago just did the unthinkable by raising the ante to an estimated \$4.5 billion for the next four years.

Just don't let NFL owners cry about player loyalty when the free-agent signing period begins March 1. Then again, don't expect the players to do anything but laugh on the way to the bank. They are guaranteed 66 percent of owner revenues under next year's salary cap.

Tipping their cap

Just as NFL Players Association Executive Director Gene Upshaw had suggested, the salary-cap scare was no more than that. A scare.

Originally, because of network threats to cut back TV revenue, NFL owners had told their executives that teams probably would have only \$30 million to \$32 million to spend on player salaries in 1994. Now, teams figure to have no less than \$39 million to spend on salaries and possibly more.

That could mean the rich get richer, at least in the case of San Francisco, which has a payroll of \$42 million in '93.

The 49ers' payroll, along with several other clubs, is inflated because of player contracts that were structured or restructured to be front-loaded into the capless '93 season. Nevertheless, the new TV deal will give the 49ers more flexibility to retain potential free agents such as offensive tackles Harris Barton and Steve Wallace, guard Guy McIntyre, cornerback Don Griffin and wide receiver John Taylor.

The same could be said for

the Cowboys, who have four offensive linemen who are potential free agents, not to mention defensive tackle Tony Casillas and fullback Daryl Johnston.

Still, it remains to be seen just how much Owner Jerry Jones will dish out, even with a new wad of cash. And, it remains to be seen how much loyalty Jones commands compared with 49ers Owner Edward DeBartolo Jr., who is more beloved by his players.

Another point: Philadelphia is trying to sign linebacker Seth Joyner and defensive end Clyde Simmons because both can become unrestricted free agents March 1. The Eagles offered each player a reported \$10 million over three years. The players didn't jump, and that was before news of the new TV deal became known.

Unless they're blown away by offers, count on player agents to steer their clients to the free-agent market.

So, it says here there remains hope for New England Coach Bill Parcells, providing he can get a new owner to sign the checks. Because of the Patriots' low salary level, Parcells could

have had as much as \$20 million to spend on free agents under the old TV formula. Now, he may have \$28 million.

As for the cries of the Bengals, Rams and Buccaneers that they've been robbed before the store is open, it's hard to buy. Although the three protested a ruling that allows teams to sweeten player contracts without having it count against the '94 cap, it's hard to imagine the Bengals, Rams and Bucs diving in to take advantage of other clubs' cap problems. Since when have these teams truly put their money where their mouths are? If anything, the latest developments offers them a convenient excuse to be ordinary again.

Besides, there will be plenty of free agents out there with their hands open. You'll hear them knocking.

Heating up again

Just when it appeared Atlanta Coach Jerry Glanville was clear from the firing line, the club's 30-17 loss to Washington probably will re-introduce the issue.

The players want Glanville out, according to a handful of team leaders I've spoken with. The team's

CBS broadcaster Pat Summerall was in Detroit, preparing for his network's telecast of the Detroit-San Francisco game, when the word came down about Fox. His eyes were opened.

"I have been doing the NFL on CBS since 1962, (and) I guess you take things for granted," Summerall says. "This morning at the 49ers' practice, I told some of the players some broadcasters might be out of a job, but all they said was their salary cap now would go up."

CBS and the NFL had been close partners through the years, starting in 1956. It was CBS's telecast of the 1958 NFL championship game between the Baltimore Colts and New York Giants that was considered the league's breakthrough game on a national level. The fan got hooked on the NFL that day.

The NFC was a valuable property because the major markets belonged to it... the New York Giants, Chicago Bears, Los Angeles Rams, Washington Redskins, San Francisco 49ers, the Philadelphia Eagles. Even the sentimental favorite, Green Bay, was an NFC market.

And despite losing \$150 million over four years on the contract that expires this season, CBS continued to use the NFC/NFL audience as a vehicle to promote its prime-time programs. The network's biggest show, "60 Minutes," has used the NFL as a lead-in.

As for Fox, we can only wait and see. Obviously, projections of a \$500-million loss don't impress the deep pockets of Mr. Murdoch. Just as CBS used the NFL to promote its prime-time programming, so will Fox. The football deal also will allow Fox to expand its market penetration from about 94 percent of the nation to 99 percent.



The bottom line: Dallas' Jones and other new-breed owners are crazy like a Fox.

(It may not surprise you to hear that Fox may have gotten the rights to televise late Sunday games at 5 p.m. ET, which could have a negative impact on CBS's "60 Minutes," which airs at 7 p.m. ET. This is commonly known as adding insult to injury.)

The NFL took the Fox deal because of the money. Any other explanation seems ludicrous, but Fox made a tremendous commitment to promote the league on a year-round basis. In the beginning, ratings may dip slightly, but the NFL is hoping to expand its audience to include the elusive 18-to-34 age bracket that all advertisers target. Fox has those youthful viewers, you know.

Youthful but not innocent. But then, in 1993, few things are innocent in the world of professional sports business. Just ask CBS.



Hot seat: Glanville is back on the firing line.

star, cornerback Deion Sanders, simply refers to the coach as "the little man in the black hat," and he does not say it with affection.

There's also word around the league that Glanville's most valued assistant, offensive coordinator/assistant head coach June Jones will walk away when his contract expires at the end of this season. If that happens, it also would cause a player uprising.

None of this can be a secret to Falcons President Taylor Smith, who, along with vice president of player personnel Ken Herock, has helped push the franchise into a phase of near respectability. The talent is there. Everybody in the league knows it.

We rate Atlanta's talent

with the best in the league, right there with the 49ers and Cowboys," New Orleans Saints defensive coordinator Steve Sidwell says. "A lot of teams would love to have their players."

With games left against the Bengals and Cardinals, the Falcons should finish 8-8. It's hard to fire a coach after a .500 season. Unless, that is, you're serious about making a run for the Super Bowl.

On the sidelines

It has come to my attention that several players were left off my NFC-AFC Pro Bowl ballots. Here's a bunch of them. Oilers FS Marcus Robertson (hurt, out for the year), Oilers QB Warren Moon, Jets QB Boomer Esiason, Jets OLB Mo Lewis, Raiders CB Terry McDaniel, Steelers OT John Jackson, Raiders DE Anthony Smith, Browns DT Michael Dean Perry, Broncos SS Dennis Smith, Seahawks FS Eugene Robinson, Broncos RB Rod Bernstein, Seahawks C Ray Donaldson, Rams C Bern Brostek, Cowboys G Nate Newton, Saints OT William Roaf, 49ers OT Steve Wallace, Bears MLB Dante Jones, Saints ILB Vaughan

Johnson, Cardinals CB Aeneas Williams, Redskins CB Darrell Green, Giants S Greg Jackson, Vikings S Vencie Glenn and Falcons K Norm Johnson. I'm sure there are more. Maybe these guys (the ones left off) can play the winner of the Pro Bowl. But for goodness sake, don't forget that 49ers OT Harris Barton is overdue a Pro Bowl starting spot.

The Pro Bowl will be shown February 6 on ESPN, but ABC secured the all-star game for the next four years under the new TV contract. ABC will continue with Monday Night Football, and ESPN and TNT will continue to split the Sunday night package. Gone are two bye weeks. Unfortunately, there remains one bye, which equates to 16 games played over 17 weeks with a two-week wait between the conference championship games and the Super Bowl.

Also, ABC gets a Super Bowl, as does Fox, with the other two games still up for bid.

For updates on Chris Mortensen's TSN Pro Football Report, call 1-900-860-4400, 95 cents per minute. Callers under 18 must have permission. The service is accessible from touchtone and rotary phones.

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The Vikings find the right medicine

It has been the Year of the Stocky Running Back, and many of these Robert (The Tank) Holmes look-a-likes have emerged from nowhere.

The leader of this group, of course, is Rams rookie Jerome Bettis (5 feet 11, 243 pounds), who did come from somewhere (Notre Dame) and has emerged as the NFL's rushing leader. The stocky stars include Houston's Gary Brown (5-11, 229), Atlanta's Erric Pegram (5-9, 190), Pittsburgh's Leroy Thompson (5-10, 215) and rookies Ron Moore (5-10, 226) of Phoenix, Reggie Brooks (5-8, 205) of Washington, Roosevelt Potts (6-0, 258) of Indianapolis and Natrone Means (5-10, 245) of San Diego.

Last Sunday, the Vikings' Scottie Graham (5-9, 215) joined the club, pounding the Packers for 139 yards in 30 carries in Minnesota's surprising 21-17 victory. And Graham really did come from nowhere — or a pharmacy, anyway.

Graham, an Ohio State product, was a No. 7 pick of the Steelers last season but was cut before the season. He spent most of the season on the Steelers' practice squad before being signed by the Jets late in the season. He was cut by the Jets in training camp this year and went back to Columbus, O., to work on a master's degree in education. He also took a job as a clerk at the Linden Avenue Pharmacy.

In early October, however, the Vikings came calling and added Graham to the practice squad. He later was activated and began playing on the special teams. Finally, with Terry Allen and rookie Robert Smith (a former running mate of Graham's at Ohio State) out with knee injuries, and with the Vikings lacking confidence in veterans Roger Craig and Barry Word, Graham found himself in the starting lineup the past two weeks. He has totaled 218 yards rushing in 50 attempts.

Now, he is more than the featured back for the Vikings. He is the most important part of their offense. If he is successful, he triggers Jim McMahon's low-risk passing game.

"The offensive line did such a great job that any back could have done the same job," Graham said. "I didn't try anything fancy. I just tried to run straight ahead, hold onto the ball and take what they gave me. The offensive linemen kept telling me that the cutbacks were there, and they were right. I just kept cutting back."

Graham suddenly appears to have become a major part of the Vikings' crowded running-back picture in '94.

He also may be the most productive active running back in a division that earlier was ruled by the likes of Barry Sanders, Allen and Neal Anderson. "Scottie looked great to me even when he was in college and then on our practice squad," Coach Dennis Green says. "He just really runs hard."

Even though Graham carried 30 times against the Packers, he continued to play on the special teams. Doesn't a 30-rush back deserve a break from the special teams? "No way," Graham says. "I'm not going to change a single thing I do."

Marv's merry melody

Bills Coach Marv Levy was so moved by his team's victory over Miami, he sang to his players after the game. It was an



A load: Bettis is the leader of the stocky stars.

old song by Bob Crosby, brother of Bing Crosby, called, "It Ain't What You Do it's the Way What You Do it."

At the end of the team meeting Saturday night, Levy, as always, reminded his players that schemes and strategy wouldn't matter. He said they shouldn't dwell on whether a 3-4 defense or a 4-3 were used, or whether they ran the no-huddle offense or huddled.

"Then," Levy recalled, "I said, 'Back in the Stone Age, there was a singer named Bing Crosby. He had a brother named Bob Crosby, who had a big band called 'Bob Crosby and the Bobcats.' There was a song that was very popular at that time, and it's applicable to tomorrow's game, and if we win, I'll sing it to you.'"

And he did. "That was hilarious," wide receiver Don Beebe says. "I was laughing so hard I couldn't really understand him. I thought he was going to start rapping there for a minute."

Hold everything

All of those stories about how the NFL should fix its declining product might have been premature. If the past two weeks are any indication, maybe much doesn't need to be done after all. The excitement level has picked up considerably for the stretch run.

In Week 15, a record 12 games were decided by fewer than eight points, and seven of those were decided by fewer than four points. Then, in Week 16, the points came in bunches. The league had been averaging a lowly 36.6 points per game entering the week, but on Sunday teams averaged 44.1 points per game. And eight of the 13 games last weekend were decided by fewer than 11.

Are you still ready to abolish the zone defense inside the 20-yard line?

GOOD MOVES

NOT TIGHTENING UP: Pete Metzelaars caught seven passes for 65 yards, and Keith McKeller caught two passes for 22 yards as the Bills used their light ends to take advantage of Dolphins strong safety Jarvis Williams playing close to the line of scrimmage for run support.

DOWN BUT NOT OUT: Dazed Chiefs quarterback Joe Montana called a timeout after Chargers linebacker Junior Seau flattened him on an incomplete pass in the third quarter. On the next play, Montana completed a 4-yard scoring pass to J.J. Burden for a 21-17 lead.

A SLICK PLAN: Facing a sloppy field and with little experience at receiver, Denver went to running back Rod Bernstine to control the ball and avoid mistakes at Chicago. It worked.



Dazed: The T.O. helped Joe.

BAD MOVES

KICKING HIMSELF: Trailing, 20-3, early in the third quarter, Coach Bill Cowher called for a punt on 4th-and-9 at the Oilers' 36. The ball was downed at the 1, but the Steelers needed a score to get back in the game.

POOR LOSER: Jets Coach Bruce Coslet complained about Dallas' blitzing in the fourth quarter with a big lead. Dallas Coach Jimmy Johnson said: "Somebody needs to pass me a note and tell me when we can blitz and when we can't."

NOT SO SHARPE: Although Sterling Sharpe was hobbled by turf toe, the Packers only passed twice to Mark Clayton. One resulted in an 11-yard touchdown reception and the other resulted in a pass interference call. The Vikings defeated Green Bay, 21-17.

TSN POWER POLL

Team	W-L	This week	Last week
1. Cowboys	10-4	vs. Washington	1
2. 49ers	10-4	vs. Houston*	4
3. Giants	10-3	at Phoenix	2
4. Oilers	10-4	at San Francisco*	6
5. Chiefs	10-4	at Minnesota	5
6. Bills	10-4	vs. N.Y. Jets	7
7. Broncos	9-5	vs. Tampa Bay	8
8. Dolphins	9-5	at San Diego**	3
9. Raiders	9-5	at Green Bay	11
10. Packers	8-6	vs. L.A. Raiders	9
11. Steelers	8-6	at Seattle	10
12. Jets	8-6	at Buffalo	12
13. Bears	7-7	vs. Detroit	13
14. Saints	7-6	at Philadelphia	16
15. Vikings	7-7	vs. Kansas City	18
16. Lions	8-6	at Chicago	14
17. Falcons	6-8	at Cincinnati	15
18. Chargers	6-8	vs. Miami**	17
19. Eagles	6-8	vs. New Orleans	21
20. Browns	6-8	at L.A. Rams	19
21. Cardinals	5-9	vs. N.Y. Giants	24
22. Seahawks	5-9	vs. Pittsburgh	20
23. Redskins	4-10	at Dallas	26
24. Colts	4-10	at New England	25
25. Buccaneers	4-10	at Denver	23
26. Rams	4-10	vs. Cleveland	22
27. Patriots	3-11	vs. Indianapolis	27
28. Bengals	2-12	vs. Atlanta	28

*Saturday

**Monday night

THE SPORTING NEWS NFL Power Poll is determined by TSN editors.

AFTER 16 WEEKS...

■ Out of a possible 840 minutes this season, the Colts have led for all of 77 minutes, 16 seconds.

■ In two seasons, Green Bay's Mike Holmgren is 0-4 against Minnesota and his old coaching comrade, Dennis Green, and 17-9 against the rest of the league.

■ In his two seasons, Cincinnati's Dave Shula is 3-0 against the Los Angeles teams and 4-23 against the rest of the NFL.

■ In their seven victories, the Bears have recorded 24 takeaways and 11 giveaways. In their seven defeats, the Bears have compiled five takeaways and 17 giveaways.

■ When Steve Broussard scored from the 2, it marked the Falcons' first rushing touchdown since Week 2.

■ The Rams' Jerome Bettis has recorded four consecutive 100-yard games to take the NFL lead in rushing. He leads Emmitt Smith by 62 yards and could become the first rookie to lead the NFL in rushing since Eric Dickerson did it in 1983.

■ The Oilers are the 10th team since 1960 to go unbeaten in their division. Five of the nine went on to win Super Bowls — the 1972 Dolphins, the '75 Steelers, the '76 Raiders, the '84 49ers and the '85 Bears.

■ So much for the home-field advantage. Eight of 13 road teams won last weekend.

THE WORD ON...

JOHN JACKSON Pittsburgh Steelers



Man of Steel: With Jackson showing the way, the Steelers are rushing up a storm.

team that last season sent two offensive linemen to the Pro Bowl — center Dermontti Dawson and guard Carlton Hasegawa — Jackson is building a strong case for the Steelers to duplicate such a feat. Even with the loss of Hasegawa, who missed seven games with a foot injury and substance-abuse problems, the Steelers have boasted the AFC's No. 1 rushing attack most of the season.

"We're playing the way we should be playing," Jackson says. "We've got a lot of guys who've been around a while and played together for a while. You kind of expect it, don't you?"

Certainly the Steelers did last year when they demoted Jackson to part-time status after five games. The demotion, Jackson says, probably was deserved because he was coming off a particularly poor game against the Browns. Nonetheless, it stung his pride. Not to mention his sense of gamesmanship.

"We were looking for consistency at that position," offensive line coach Kent Stephenson says. "He was coming off an ankle injury that was hampering him, and we just weren't getting the kind of consistent performance that we needed. There were a lot of other things that were involved there, but I know John has come back from it in a very positive manner. He prepares well and understands the game plan and his responsibilities."

Some of Jackson's problems could have been traced to off-field problems. He and Dawson were involved in legal wrangling with their former agent, Joe Senkovich, who they claim defrauded them out of more than \$400,000. Also, Jackson's father had become seriously ill during the season. If that weren't enough, Jackson was upset when he had to put his dog to sleep.

"What I tried to tell him was, I've been through that, too," Love says. "I told him don't lose confidence, don't get down. He didn't get mad or pout. He didn't say anything negative. He took it personal, the way he should have. He showed his character and the type of person he is by coming back."

Jackson reclaimed his position after three games out of the lineup and has been almost indomitable since then. His first trip to the Pro Bowl may be his reward.

"There was a time when we thought he had to get stronger, especially at that position," the Bills' Butler says. "But over the last couple of years he's really made outstanding progress, and where I've seen him make it most is against outstanding pass rushers. He does it with patience. He's not overaggressive, he's not a big puncher. He's just improved steadily."

—GERRY DULAC

STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA
Buffalo	10	4	0	.714	283	218
Miami	9	5	0	.643	302	273
New York Jets	8	6	0	.571	258	307
Indianapolis	4	10	0	.286	19	310
New England	3	11	0	.214	167	249
NATIONAL CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA
San Francisco	10	4	0	.714	334	273
Pittsburgh	9	5	0	.643	286	256
Cleveland	8	6	0	.571	253	277
Cincinnati	7	7	0	.500	253	282
Kansas City	6	8	0	.429	284	273
Los Angeles Raiders	5	9	0	.357	273	268
Denver	5	9	0	.357	233	234
San Diego	5	9	0	.357	245	253
Seattle	5	9	0	.357	240	274

AMERICAN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA
New York Jets	10	4	0	.714	344	288
Dallas	9	5	0	.643	302	273
Philadelphia	8	6	0	.571	299	245
Phoenix	7	7	0	.500	282	254
Washington	6	8	0	.429	278	293
NATIONAL CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA
Green Bay	10	4	0	.714	292	252
Detroit	9	5	0	.643	248	248
Minnesota	8	6	0	.571	233	27
Chicago	7	7	0	.500	244	90
Tampa Bay	6	8	0	.429	203	334
San Francisco	5	9	0	.357	432	248
New Orleans	4	10	0	.286	257	269
Atlanta	3	11	0	.214	289	337
Los Angeles Rams	2	12	0	.143	97	379

AMERICAN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA
San Francisco	10	4	0	.714	334	273
Pittsburgh	9	5	0	.643	286	256
Cleveland	8	6	0	.571	253	277
Cincinnati	7	7	0	.500	253	282
Kansas City	6	8	0	.429	284	273
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Atlanta	3	11	0	.214	289	337
Los Angeles Rams	2	12	0	.143	97	379

SATURDAY'S GAMES

BRONCOS 13, BEARS 3

Denver	0	10	3	6-13
Chicago	3	0	0	0-3

First Quarter

Ch—FG Butler 31 3 13

Second Quarter

Den—FG Elam 29 8 32

Den—Delpino 1 run (Elam kick) 13 36

Third Quarter

Den—FG Elam 24 7 58

A—53.056

First downs	13	14
Rushes yards	33 129	26 84
Passing	105	101
Punt Returns	2 7	4 14
Kickoff Returns	7 35	4 55
Interception Returns	3 25	0 0
Comp. Air Int.	14 24 0	14 29 3
Sacked-Yards Lost	2 8	4 19
Fumbles Lost	5 40	5 41
Penalties Yards	1 1	3 2
Time of Possession	32:49	27:11

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Denver: Bernstine 20 103, Delpino 8 14, Elway 4 8, Milburn 1 4, Chicago: Worley 20 72, Heyward 3 6, Williams 2 6, Green 1 0.

PASSING—Denver: Elway 14 24 0 113, Chicago: Willis 14 29 3 120.

RECEIVING—Denver: Marshall 4 24, Tamen 3 27, Sharpe 2 20, Kimbrough 2 17, Johnson 1 13, Bernstine 1 8, Milburn 1 6, Chicago: Christian 4 40, Obee 2 24, Heyward 2 15, Worley 2 10, Waddle 2 9, Wetmore 1 13, Conway 1 8.

MISSED FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS—Denver: Elam 41, INTERCEPTIONS—Denver: Drane 1 6, Ahlster 1 13, Smith 1 5.

KICKOFF RETURNS—Denver: Delpino 2 35, Chicago: Green 2 21, Conway 2 34.

PUNT RETURNS—Denver: Bradford 1 0, Milburn 1 7, Chicago: Obee 4 14.

SACKS—Denver: Fletcher 1 1/4, Green 1, Kruger 1, Williams 1/4, Chicago: Derr 2, Zorn 1.

COWBOYS 28, JETS 7

Dallas	0	7	14	7-28
N.Y. Jets	0	0	0	7-7

Second Quarter

Den—Irvin 42 pass from Akman (Murray kick) 14 24

Third Quarter

Den—Irvin 3 pass from Akman (Murray kick) 13 37

Den—K. Smith 32 interception return (Murray kick) 14 28

Fourth Quarter

N.Y.—B. Barter 1 run (Banchard kick) 3 32

Den—Johnson 4 run (Murray kick) 9 07

A—73.108

First downs	19	23
Rushes yards	30 129	27 81
Passing	235	214
Punt Returns	2 30	2 7
Kickoff Returns	1 22	5 92
Interception Returns	1 32	3 21
Comp. Air Int.	21 27 3	24 46 1
Sacked-Yards Lost	3 17	2 20
Fumbles Lost	3 35	6 37
Penalties Yards	6 37	4 24
Time of Possession	30 14	29 46

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Dallas: E. Smith 20 91, Akman 3 31, Coleman 2 7, Agee 2 4, Johnson 2 4, K. Williams 1 (misc) 1, New York: J. Johnson 12 42, B. Barter 9 17, Eason 3 17, B. Thomas 1 5, Murrell 2 0.

PASSING—Dallas: Akman 21 27 3 252, New York: Eason 21 37 1 194, Nage 3 9 0 40.

RECEIVING—Dallas: Irvin 6 91, K. Williams 6 70, M. Vachek 3 31, Harper 2 41, E. Smith 2 11, Johnson 2 8, New York: Moore 7 69, B. Barter 5 60, J. Johnson 4 24, Burkett 3 25, Carpenter 2 29, Mitchell 2 16, Mathis 1 11.

MISSED FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS—None.

INTERCEPTIONS—Dallas: K. Smith 1 32, New York: E. Thomas 2 20, Lewis 1 1.

KICKOFF RETURNS—Dallas: K. Williams 1 22, New York: Murrell 4 73, Pro 1 19.

PUNT RETURNS—Dallas: K. Williams 2 30, New York: Mathis 1 0, Hicks 1 7.

SACKS—Dallas: J. Jones 1, Norton 1, New York: Houston 1, Legum 1, M. Washington 1.

SUNDAY'S GAMES

BILLS 47, DOLPHINS 34

Buffalo	9	17	21	6-47
Miami	7	13	7	7-34

First Quarter

Buf—K. Davis 1 run (kick failed) 4 54

Mia—Ingam 14 pass from Mitchell (Stoyanovich kick) 10 08

Second Quarter

Buf—FG Christie 38 13 40

Third Quarter

Mia—FG Stoyanovich 41 2 56

Mia—Jackson 18 pass from Mitchell (Stoyanovich kick) 4 48

Buf—K. Davis 12 run (Christie kick) 7 59

Buf—FG Christie 32 13 33

Buf—M. Washington 27 interception return (Christie kick) 13 41

Mia—FG Stoyanovich 15 15 00

Fourth Quarter

Buf—Odomes 25 fumble return (Christie kick) 17

Buf—K. Davis 1 run (Christie kick) 2 48

Buf—Beebe 28 pass from Kelly (Christie kick) 5 59

Mia—K. By 30 pass from Deberg (Stoyanovich kick) 7 59

Mia—Ingam 7 pass from Deberg (Stoyanovich kick) 1 34

A—71.597

First downs	28	24
Rushes yards	44 129	11 23
Passing	245	400
Punt Returns	2 20	1 7
Kickoff Returns	5 96	5 108
Interception Returns	3 78	1 29
Comp. Air Int.	20 31 1	32 59 3
Sacked-Yards Lost	0 0	3 28
Fumbles Lost	3 45	2 42
Penalties Yards	1 1	2 2
Time of Possession	34 54	25 06

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Buffalo: K. Davis 13 54, T. Thomas 26 52, Brooks 1 7, Gardner 2 5, Reed 1 3, Kelly 1 (misc) 2, Miami: Higgs 5 13, Byers 3 8, Kirby 1 6, Mitchell 1 2, Fryer 1 (misc) 6.

PASSING—Buffalo: Kelly 20 30 1 245, T. Thomas 0 1 0 0, Miami: Mitchell 12 24 2 156, Deberg 20 35 1 273.

RECEIVING—Buffalo: McClellan 7 65, T. Thomas 4 34, Reed 3 65, Beebe 3 49, McKeller 2 22, Brooks 1 10, Miami: Kirby 9 148, Ingram 5 80, Fryer 5 59, Jackson 3 43, McDuffie 3 41, Martin 3 38, Byers 2 11, Higgs 1 9.

MISSED FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS—None.

INTERCEPTIONS—Buffalo: Darby 1 32, Washington 1 27, Odomes 1 19, Miami: Brown 1 29.

KICKOFF RETURNS—Buffalo: Copeland 3 55, Beebe 2 41, Miami: McDuffie 3 70, M. Williams 2 38.

PUNT RETURNS—Buffalo: Copeland 1 20, Taster 1 0, Miami: McDuffie 1 7.

SACKS—Buffalo: Parrish 1, B. Smith 1, Gogans 1.

VIKINGS 21, PACKERS 17

Minnesota	0	7	7	7-21
Green Bay	3	7	0	7-17

First Quarter

G.B.—FG Jacke 20 14 33

Second Quarter

Min—Irvin 8 pass from McMahon (Revez kick) 2 05

G.B.—Sharpe 37 pass from Jacke (Jacke kick) 13 39

Third Quarter

Min—C. Carter 6 pass from McMahon (Revez kick) 6 52

Fourth Quarter

Min—C. Carter 25 pass from McMahon (Revez kick) 3 43

G.B.—Clayton 11 pass from Favre (Jacke kick) 9 09

A—54.773

First downs	21	16
Rushes yards	38 154	18 67
Passing	207	253
Punt Returns	2 18	4 50
Kickoff Returns	4 69	3 42
Interception Returns	1 0	0 0
Comp. Air Int.	22 31 0	20 33 1
Sacked-Yards Lost	0 0	1 3
Fumbles Lost	7 39	5 39
Penalties Yards	6 73	4 35
Time of Possession	35 52	24 08

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Minnesota: Graham 30 139, McMahon 5 15, Craig 1 2, Salisbury 2 (misc) 21, Green Bay: Thompson 9 40, Favre 5 24, E. Bennett 5 3.

PASSING—Minnesota: McMahon 22 31 0 207, Green Bay: Favre 20 33 1 256.

RECEIVING—Minnesota: C. Carter 6 106, Jordan 5 29, Craig 5 18, A. Carter 3 26, Graham 1 11, Trull 1 10, A. Hall 1 6, Green Bay: Sharpe 5 106, J. Harris 5 50, E. Bennett 4 44, Thompson 2 36, Clayton 1 11, C. Hattie 1 5, Lewis 1 4.

MISSED FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS—Minnesota: Revez 51 54.

INTERCEPTIONS—Minnesota: Glenn 1 0, Kickoff Returns—Minnesota: Irvin 4 69, Green Bay: Wilson 2 33, Jarvick 1 9.

PUNT RETURNS—Minnesota: Gifford 2 16, Green Bay: Pro 4 50.

SACKS—Minnesota: Randle 1.

EAGLES 20, COLTS 10

Philadelphia	10	0	7	3-20
Indianapolis	0	0	0	7-10

First Quarter

Ph—FG Ruzek 21 6 52

Ph—Sherman 1 run (Ruzek kick) 12 25

Ind—FG Bassock 39 14 58

Third Quarter

Ph—Williams 14 pass from Strick (Ruzek kick) 6 30

Fourth Quarter

Ph—FG Ruzek 25 4 28

Ind—Langhorne 24 pass from George (Bassock kick) 10 42

A—44.952

First downs	23	16
Rushes yards	39 151	12 34
Passing	189	230
Punt Returns	5 45	3 5
Kickoff Returns	0 0	5 108
Interception Returns	0 0	1 3
Comp. Air Int.	21 39 1	21 39 0
Sacked-Yards Lost	3 28	4 22
Fumbles Lost	6 41	6 49
Penalties Yards	0 0	3 3
Time of Possession	37 55	22 06

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Philadelphia: Walker 18 79, Sherman 11 45, Joseph 8 24, Bricker 2 3, Indianapolis: Potts 11 31, George 1 0.

PASSING—Philadelphia: Bricker 21 39 1 217, Indianapolis: George 21 39 0 252.

RECEIVING—Philadelphia: Williams 6 105, Walker 6 29, Joseph 4 40, Bricker 2 16, M. Johnson 1 12, Bailey 1 6, Sherman 1 7, Indianapolis: Langhorne 7 90, Hester 4 66, Cash 3 31, Overking 2 16, Attridge 2 12, Potts 1 15, Co 1 12, Oliver 1 10.

MISSED FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS—None.

INTERCEPTIONS—Indianapolis: Buchanan 1 0, Bricker 0 3.

KICKOFF RETURNS—Indianapolis: Verdin 5 108.

PUNT RETURNS—Philadelphia: Sikahema 5 46, Indianapolis: Verdin 3 5.

SACKS—Philadelphia: Millard 1, Perry 1, Harmon 1, W. Thomas 1, Indianapolis: Hestrod 1, Harrod 1.



Bucking Bronco: Denver's Rod Bernstine plows over the Bears' Vinson Smith. Bernstine finished with 103 yards on 20 carries.

CHIEFS 28, CHARGERS 24

San Diego	10	7	0	7-24
Kansas City	8	14	7	7-28

First Quarter

S.D.—Harrison 28 pass from Humphries (Carney kick) 1 35

S.D.—FG Carney 38 3 47

Second Quarter

S.D.—Young 3 pass from Friesz (Carney kick) 3 03

K.C.—Allen 1 run (Lowery kick) 7 28

K.C.—Davis 8 pass from Montana (Lowery kick) 12 50

Third Quarter

K.C.—Briden 4 pass from Montana (Lowery kick) 10 21

Fourth Quarter

K.C.—Davis 28 pass from Kreg (Lowery kick) 2 05

S.D.—Moore 2 run (Carney kick) 9 53

A—74.778

First downs	20	20
Rushes yards	28 94	29 104
Passing	174	217
Punt Returns	4 22	3 12
Kickoff Returns	4 117	5 102
Interception Returns	1 15	2 31
Comp. Air Int.	20 39 2	22 36 1
Sacked-Yards Lost	3 15	2 4
Fumbles Lost	5 43	6 36
Penalties Yards	1 1	3 2
Time of Possession	28 40	31 20

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—San Diego: Butts 15 61, Means 10 22, Harman 1 12, Hendrickson 1 0, Jefferson 1 (misc) 11, Kansas City: Miller 8 42, Anders 3 29, Montana 4 17, Allen 14 18.

PASSING—San Diego: Humphries 1 1 0 28, Friesz 19 38 2 181, Kansas City: Montana 18 32 1 188, Kreg 4 4 0 53.

RECEIVING—San Diego: Pupunu 6 48, Miller 5 67, Harman 5 53, M. Lewis 2 16, Young 1 3, Means 1 2, Kansas City: Allen 5 20, Davis 4 84, Anders 4 30, Briden 3 28, Hayes 2 36, Cash 2 19, Barnard 1 3, Miller 1 1.

MISSED FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS—None.

INTERCEPTIONS—San Diego: Frank 1 15, Kansas City: A. Lewis 2 31.

KICKOFF RETURNS—San Diego: M. Lewis 4 117, Kansas City: Hughes 5 102.

PUNT RETURNS—San Diego: M. Lewis 2 11, Gordon 2 11, Kansas City: Briden 1 8, Carter 1 (misc) 51, Mincy 1 9.

SACKS—San Diego: O'Hair 1, Richard 1, Kansas City: Smith 2, Thomas 1.

RAIDERS 27, BUCCANEERS 20

Tampa Bay	0	10	0	10-20
L.A. Raiders	14	3	0	10-27

First Quarter

L.A.—Wright 27 pass from Hostetter (Jaeger kick) 9 40

L.A.—McCallum 5 run (Jaeger kick) 11 09

Second Quarter

T.B.—Cobb 5 run (Husted kick) 3 18

L.A.—FG Jaeger 50 12 28

T.B.—FG Husted 57 14 50

Third Quarter

L.A.—FG Jaeger 33 3 45

L.A.—Hostetter 1 run (Jaeger kick) 4 59

T.B.—Cobb 2 run (Husted kick) 7 46

T.B.—FG Husted 31 13 26

A—40.532

First downs	24	17
Rushes yards	30 101	23 17
Passing	265	248
Punt Returns	1 8	0 0
Kickoff Returns	5 63	1 0
Interception Returns	0 0	0 0
Comp. Air Int.	21 34 0	19 30 0
Sacked-Yards Lost	5 30	3 12
Fumbles Lost	4 38	5 41
Penalties Yards	2 2	0 0
Time of Possession	32 50	27 10

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Philadelphia: Walker 18 79, Sherman 11 45, Joseph 8 24, Bricker 2 3, Indianapolis: Potts 11 31, George 1 0.

RUSHING—Tampa Bay: Cobb 22

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—New England, K. Turner 4 53, Russell 14 38, Bledsoe 4 9, Gash 3 5, Croom 2 4, Cleveland, Metcalf 12 48, Vardell 14 33, Testaverde 1 (minus 1)
PASSING—New England, Bledsoe 19 47 1 210
RECEIVING—New England, Ensbey 6 77, Timpon 3 42, Coates 3 35, K. Turner 3 17, Croom 1 14, Russell 1 11, Cook 1 7, O'Brien 1 6, Cleveland, Metcalf 8 81, Carter 4 81, McCord 4 51, Kinchen 2 48, Hoard 1 17, C. Williams 1 14, Vardell 1 7
MISSED FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS—None
INTERCEPTIONS—New England, Lambert 1 0, Hurst 1 0, Cleveland, Turner 1 0
KICKOFF RETURNS—New England, O'Brien 2 36, Harris 2 35, Cleveland, Metcalf 2 47, Hoard 2 51
PUNT RETURNS—New England, Harris 3 41, Cleveland, Metcalf 2 28
SACKS—Cleveland, Burnett 1

REDSKINS 30, FALCONS 17

Atkins 7 0 7 3-17
 Washington 0 18 0 14-30

First Quarter

Atkins—Prichard 29 pass from Hebert (Johnson kick) 2:34

Second Quarter

Was—Safety punter Alexander was tackled in the end zone, 4:40
 Was—Rypien 1 run (Lohmiller kick) 9:12
 Was—Johnson 69 interception return (Lohmiller kick) 14:51

Third Quarter

Atkins—Broussard 2 run (Johnson kick) 5:15

Fourth Quarter

Atkins—FG Johnson 41:10-21
 Was—Byrnes 8 run (Lohmiller kick) 11:54
 Was—Coleman 29 fumble return (Lohmiller kick) 12:48
 A—50, 192

	Atkins	Was
First downs	22	6
Rushes-yards	35-182	19-38
Passing	186	129
Punt Returns	3-18	2-8
Kickoff Returns	5-78	5-81
Interception Returns	1-0	4-82
Comp-Att Int	24-43-4	13-23-1
Sacked-Yards Lost	7-37	0-0
Fumbles-Lost	4-44	7-40
Penalties-Yards	4-2	1-1
Time of Possession	10:00	0:00

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Atlanta, Broussard 28 182, Pagan 8 20, Alexander 1 0, Washington, Byrnes 10 18, Byrnes 2 12, Brooks 4 9, Rypien 2 1, Mitchell 1 0
PASSING—Atlanta, Hebert 24 42 4 233, Toliver 0 1 0, Washington, Rypien 13 23 1 120
RECEIVING—Atlanta, Prichard 8 62, Haynes 5 63, Pagan 4 14, Rison 3 35, D. Sanders 2 18, Hill 2 13, Washington, Howard 3 44, Mann 3 17, Evans 3 11, R. Sanders 2 41, Byrnes 1 0, McGee 1 7
MISSED FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS—Washington, Lohmiller 42
INTERCEPTIONS—Atlanta, Sanders 1 0, Washington, Carter 1 0, Copeland 1 0, Coleman 1 13, A. Johnson 1 69
KICKOFF RETURNS—Atlanta, Sanders 2 44, Rutherford 1 7, Phillips 1 0, T. Smith 1 18, Washington, Mitchell 3 34, Howard 2 47
PUNT RETURNS—Atlanta, T. Smith 2 18, Clark 1 0, Washington, Mitchell 2 8
SACKS—Washington, Coleman 2, Noge 2, Palmer 2, Wilson 1

MONDAY'S GAME

ATLANTA VS. DALLAS

Pittsburgh 0 7 7 7-21
 Miami 3 3 0 14-20

First Quarter

Mia—FG Stryanovich 31:47

Second Quarter

Pit—Thompson 1 run (Anderson kick) 8:09
 Mia—FG Stryanovich 22:15:00

Third Quarter

Pit—Thompson 3 run (Anderson kick) 8:45

Fourth Quarter

Pit—Hoge 2 pass from O'Donnell (Anderson kick) 0:05
 Mia—K. Jackson 3 pass from DeBerg (Stryanovich kick) 4:30
 Mia—McDuffie 72 punt return (Stryanovich kick) 8:23
 A—73, 882

	Pit	Mia
First downs	19	21
Rushes-yards	38-120	17-49
Passing	145	259
Punt Returns	1-16	5-123
Kickoff Returns	4-72	4-111
Interception Returns	2-80	0-0
Comp-Att Int	16-28-0	27-44-2
Sacked-Yards Lost	2-18	5-45
Fumbles-Lost	7-45	3-37
Penalties-Yards	8-56	2-3
Time of Possession	32:47	27:13

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Pittsburgh, Thompson 28 81, Hoge 6 21, Stone 1 12, O'Donnell 3 6, Mann, Kirby 13 45, Byrnes 4 4
PASSING—Pittsburgh, O'Donnell 16 28 0 163, Mann, DeBerg 27 44 2 344
RECEIVING—Pittsburgh, Stone 5 33, Thompson 4 61, Green 3 37, Hoge 3 20, Mills 1 12, Mann, Kirby 7 107, Fryar 5 84, Byrnes 5 57, K. Jackson 3 42, Ingram 3 32, McDuffie 2 18, Martin 1 4, Hoge 1 0
MISSED FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS—Pittsburgh, Anderson 41, Miami, Stryanovich 37
INTERCEPTIONS—Pittsburgh, Woodson 1 54, Lake 1 26
KICKOFF RETURNS—Pittsburgh, Woodson 2 42, Stone 2 30, Mann, M. Williams 3 90, McDuffie 1 21
PUNT RETURNS—Pittsburgh, Woodson 1 16, Mann, McDuffie 5 114, Vincent 0 9
SACKS—Pittsburgh, Lloyd 2, Henry 1, Lake 1, Brown 1, Mann, King 1, Cox 1

AFC

PASS RECEIVING

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Tds.
Slaughter, Hou	77	904	11.7	4
Langhorne, Ind	72	932	12.9	3
Bledsoe, Sea	71	816	11.5	3
A. Miller, S.D.	70	939	13.4	4
Sharpe, Den	65	815	11.8	4
Kirby, Mia	65	780	12.0	3
Moore, NY J	64	843	13.2	1
Harmon, S.D.	63	553	8.8	0
Brown, Fla	62	927	15.0	5
Jeffries, Hou	62	711	11.5	5
Givins, Hou	6	789	12.9	2
Metcalf, Buf	59	553	9.4	3
Fryar, Mia	58	910	15.7	5
Hebert, Ind	55	710	12.9	0
J. Johnson, NY J	55	533	9.7	0
Metcalf, Cle	55	482	8.8	2
Williams, Sea	54	430	8.0	0
Martin, Sea	53	756	14.3	5
Brooks, Buf	53	585	11.1	4
Querry, Cin	52	621	11.9	4
Byrnes, Mia	52	516	9.9	2

SCORING—KICKING

	XP—YPA	FG—FBA	Pts.
Jager, Fla	24/26	31/40	117
Del Greco, Hou	35/38	27/32	116
Ellen, Den	37/38	22/29	103
Carney, S.D.	23/24	26/34	10
Anderson, Pit	31/31	23/25	100
Lowery, K.C.	32/32	20/26	92
Stryanovich, Mia	32/32	20/22	92
Bassucco, Ind	14/15	25/29	89
Christie, Buf	32/33	17/25	83
Kasay, Sea	25/25	19/24	82
Stanchard, NY J	29/29	17/22	80
Petry, Cin	9/12	22/29	75
Stover, Cle	30/30	13/19	66
Seaton, M.E.	15/15	14/26	57

INTERCEPTIONS

	No.	Yds.	Long	Tds.
Odomes, Buf	9	65	25	0
Woodson, Pit	8	138	63	1
E. Robinson, Sea	8	78	28	0
Robertson, Hou	7	137	69	0
A. Lewis, K.C.	6	81	24	0
B. Washington, NY J	5	124	67	1
McDaniel, Fla	5	87	39	1
Derwin, Hou	5	74	30	0
Mincy, K.C.	5	44	20	0

SACKS

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Tds.
Smith, K.C.	15	0	0	0
S. Jones, Hou	13	0	0	0
A. Smith, Fla	12	0	0	0
B. Smith, Buf	12	0	0	0
O'Neal, S.D.	10	0	0	0
Cross, Mia	10	0	0	0
Fletcher, Den	10	0	0	0
Fuller, Hou	10	0	0	0
Burnett, Cle	9	0	0	0
Meachum, Den	9	0	0	0

PUNT RETURNS

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Tds.
Metcalf, Cle	35	460	13.1	2
Gordon, S.D.	30	393	13.1	0
Brown, Fla	35	420	12.0	0
McDuffie, Mia	28	317	11.3	2
McBurt, Den	33	333	10.1	0
Carter, K.C.	26	249	9.6	0
Copeland, Buf	26	233	9.0	0
T. Brown, M.E.	25	224	9.0	0
Harris, M.E.	18	155	8.6	0
Woodson, Pit	36	309	8.6	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Tds.
Smith, Fla	22	516	23.5	0
McDuffie, Mia	22	473	21.5	0
Ball, Cin	20	432	21.6	0
Verdin, Ind	43	92	2.1	0
O'Brien, M.E.	19	408	21.4	0
Russell, Den	18	374	20.8	0
Bates, Sea	25	506	20.2	0
Lewis, S.D.	26	559	20.0	0
Robertson, Cin	26	523	19.7	0
Bachman, Cle	23	425	18.5	0

PUNTING

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Long
Gr. Montgomery, Hou	46	2099	45.6	77
Rosen, Den	59	2641	44.8	60
Hansen, Cle	74	3305	44.7	72
Tuohi, Sea	82	3657	44.6	84
J. Johnson, Cin	76	3377	44.4	60
Starn, Ind	73	3236	44.2	85
Reynolds, Pit	76	3275	43.1	81
Kidd, S.D.	52	2232	42.9	67
Saxon, M.E.	70	2991	42.7	58
Gosssett, Fla	58	2445	42.2	61
Barker, K.C.	65	2737	42.1	56
Marty, Buf	68	2757	40.5	58
Hatcher, Mia	52	2091	40.2	56
Aguar, NY J	63	2360	37.5	57

SCORING—TOUCHDOWNS

	Yds.	Touch.	Pts.
Allen, K.C.	15	12	3
Foster, Pit	5	8	0
DeAngelo, Den	8	8	0
Jackson, Cle	8	8	0
B. Baxter, NY J	7	7	0
Shupe, Den	7	7	0
C. Warren, Sea	7	7	0

BY THE NUMBERS

TEAM STATISTICS

For rushing and passing, figure is average per game; for punt and kickoff returns, figure is average per return, and for sacks and turnovers, figure is season total. Figure in bold is conference leading total.

	Rushing		Passing		Yds./Play		KO Returns		Punt Returns		Sacks		Turnovers	
	Att.	Yds.	Att.	Yds.	Yds./Pl.	Yds./Pl.	Ret.	Yds.	Ret.	Yds.	By Yds.	By Yds.	By Yds.	By Yds.
Buffalo	121.7	120.4	208.7	222.5	4.9	4.9	18.3	20.9	8.4	8.5	33	30	42	31
Cincinnati	93.2	139.5	162.5	172.9	4.1	5.0	19.6	21.5	6.8	8.7	20	48	24	19
Cleveland	105.9	101.7	185	189.4	4.9	4.5	18.8	18.2	12.5	9.4	40	41	19	34
Denver	105.2	89.9	227.3	232.6	5.0	5.2	17.8	17.9	9.8	9.9	41	38	29	25
Houston	112.0	80.5	244.0	231.7	5.3	5.0	19	17	7.3	8.6	44	34	38	40
Indianapolis	81.1	151.1	218.6	201.9	4.8	5.4	20.3	15.2	5.8	8.5	20	23	20	30
Kansas City	107.8	91.1	195.3	199.4	5.0	4.6	20.0	21.9	9.4	8.0	34	33	24	23
L.A. Raiders	91.8	114.8	224.3	183.8	5.2	4.6	20.7	16.7	12.0	8.5	43	39	22	20
Miami	91.4	98.4	275.8	204.4	5.8	4.4	21.2	20	11.6	11.5	28	26	25	31
New England	103.9	128.2	200.9	179.7	4.5	4.8	18.1	21	9.0	9.2	28	23	21	32
New York Jets	121.9	91.1	213.6	194.9	5	5.0	18.8	19.4	8	8.7	26	15	32	25
Pittsburgh	125.1	74.3	198.6	202.0	4.8	4.7	17.2	21.3	7.5	14.0	34	39	35	25
San Diego	108.0	94.4	188.0	227	4.5	5.0	18.6	16.7	12.4	8.4	32	31	28	19
Seattle	114.9	102.5	172.4	223.3	4.6	4.8	18.7	19.0	8.3	10.2	35	42	33	27

PASSING

	Att.	Comp.	Pct.	Yards	Avg. Yds.	TD	Int.	Pts.
Monroe, K.C.	246	146	59.3	1913	7.77	12	4	18
Shaw, Den	474	297	62.7	3444	7.27	22	4	10
Elston, NY J	416	255	61.3	3070	7.38	14	3	10
Wardle, Fla	360	204	56.7	2876	7.95	11	3	9
O'Donnell, Pit	404	228	56.4	2697	6.88	13	3	6
Kelly, Buf	412	253	61.4	300	7.28	17	4	16
Moore, Hou	494	292	59.1	3327	6.73	20	4	18
DeBerg, T.B. Mia	227	136	59.9	1707	7.52	7	3	10
George, Ind	334	191	57.2	2086	6.25	7	2	6
Fries, S.D.	237	128	54.0	1402	5.92	6	2	4
Warr, Sea	427	242	56.9	2576	6.03	9	2	16
Klinger, Cin	290	161	55.5	1644	5.67	3	1	9
Humphries, S.D.	265	138	51.3	1461	5.51	7	2	10
Bledsoe, M.E.	375	178	47.5	2022	5.39	9	2	14

TOTAL YARDS

	Yds.	Rank	Int.	Thomas, Buf	Yds.	Rank
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BUFFALO BILLS



W-L: 10-4 PLACE: 1st

Bills on the brink: The Bills are one victory from their fifth AFC Eastern Division championship in the past six seasons. They don't expect an easy time get-

ting it Sunday against the Jets, even though the game is at Rich Stadium, the Bills beat the Jets in October at New Jersey and the Jets' offense is struggling. The Jets scored an upset at Buffalo late in the 1992 season, but they were fueled by emotion after the career-ending neck injury that Dennis Byrd had suffered the week before against Kansas City. The Bills are on the emotional high now, having beaten Miami last Sunday at Joe Robbie Stadium. The Bills appear to have rediscovered their offense, producing four touchdowns, two field goals and a season-high 28 first downs against Miami. . . . The running game has received a big lift the past two weeks with Kenneth Davis, who ran for a game-high 64 yards and three touchdowns last Sunday. Davis is showing more explosiveness than Thurman Thomas and seems to be catching opposing defenses, which gear themselves to stop Thomas, off-guard.

Move pays off: The defense has gotten a big lift by replacing left cornerback J.D. Williams with Mickey Washington. Washington is doing a better job in coverage and has a knack for making big plays, as he did with his 27-yard interception return for a touchdown against Miami. . . . The Bills have some injury concerns entering the Jets game. Left tackle Howard Ballard suffered a sprained left ankle late in the Miami game, and his status wasn't immediately known. —VIC CARUCCI

CINCINNATI BENGALS



W-L: 2-12 PLACE: 4th

Faulk fits bill: The Bengals still have the inside track for the No. 1 draft pick, despite their victory over the Rams, and General Manager Mike Brown says, "Our inten-

tion as of now is to keep it," Brown says the Bengals need "a couple of sparklers" to enliven a roster that's "better than people think." San Diego State running back Marshall Faulk is believed to be the player Brown wants. Debunking the idea the Bengals need massive offensive-line help before anything else, Brown says, "Great running backs are players who on their own just make people miss." . . . Brown wouldn't speak specifically of Faulk, but two other factors make a Faulk pick look likely: Top Bengals running back Harold Green has had a star-crossed season and has publicly asked to be traded "anywhere" and concern is growing within the Bengals' organization that Tennessee quarterback Heath Shuler may be a tad too small for NFL greatness.

Dubious windfall: Strange as it may sound, Brown wasn't happy to learn that TV revenues in '94 may be \$40 million per team instead of an expected \$32 million. The reason is that the salary cap likely will also rise by the same amount. The raise in the cap will deplete the free-agent market by allowing



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Having a ball: Even though Steele Tovar has reason to celebrate, the Bengals are still on course to have the first pick of the draft.

teams to keep more players. The Bengals had hoped to score big in free agency by bargain-hunting among players teams were forced to unload. . . . Derrick Fenner predicts the Bengals will beat Atlanta this weekend and says "without a doubt" the Bengals will be in the playoffs next season. —JACK BRENNAN

CLEVELAND BROWNS



W-L: 6-8 PLACE: 3rd

Vote of confidence: Coach Bill Belichick won't be quick to cut Matt Stover, despite the kicker's recent slump. Misses from 46 and 56 yards figured

heavily in a loss to Houston on December 12, but Belichick says it would be a mistake to overreact. "Matt has a strong leg, and he can make the kick," Belichick says. "Sometimes a team will give up on a player, release him, then he'll come back and beat your team. It's happened all over the league." It certainly has happened to the Browns. They traded Earnest Byner after back-to-back playoff mistakes, then Byner went on to star for the Redskins. They gave up on kicker Jeff Jaeger and now Jaeger leads the AFC in scoring. . . . Defensive tackle Michael Dean Perry says he wants to finish his career with the Browns after signing a three-year, \$9.5-million contract. A year ago Perry was feuding with Belichick. "We're communicating now," Perry says. "I'm 99.9 percent sure there won't any more blowups." Nose tackle Jerry Ball is not wearing the same smile, because the Browns are reluctant to open their wallets. Ball has added 20 pounds since the season started and the Browns claim the extra weight has hampered his effectiveness. Ball says it isn't true.

Staying home: The Browns are out of the playoffs for the fourth consecutive season, something that hasn't happened since 1973-79. In that bleak streak was a 9-5 record in 1976. Unless they win their last two games (the Rams and Pittsburgh), they will have four consecutive sub-.500 seasons for the first time. —JEFF SCHUEL

DENVER BRONCOS



W-L: 9-5 PLACE: T2nd

A perfect 10: If you listen to John Elway, the Broncos may already be the hottest team in the AFC playoffs, even if they wind up as a wandering wild-card entry.

The Broncos won't qualify until they win their 10th game, but once that is accomplished, Elway is eager to go wherever the road takes them. The Broncos, Elway says, are a not only "a better team than we were," in 1991 when they lost the AFC championship game in a three-point decision at Buffalo, but also "we're a much better road team." The difference between 1990, when they won once on the road, and now, Elway says, "is just the way (Coach Wade Phillips) does it. Before, we'd get into town, and everybody would scatter. Now, we stay in the hotel, have dinner together and talk about the game. We're just much more focused. We don't go on the road hoping we can win, we go out on the road thinking we can win."

The kids are all right: Further fortifying the Broncos' playoff hopes is the improved play of their two young defensive ends, Shane Dronett and rookie Dan Williams. Dronett, a second-year player and the younger of the two by 13 months, had something of a breakout game against the Bears with four tackles, his first interception, a forced fumble and two passes knocked down at the line of scrimmage, and Williams chipped in with three tackles, a knockdown and half a sack. "They're getting good, and they're starting to think they're good," defensive coordinator Charlie Waters says. —JOSEPH SANCHEZ

HOUSTON OILERS



W-L: 10-4 PLACE: 1st

The elite meet: Although they clinched the AFC Central title last week with their ninth consecutive victory, the Oilers could be playing San Francisco at

the worst possible time. Buddy Ryan's defense could face the league's highest-scoring offense without three starting defensive backs. Free safety Marcus Robertson and cornerback Darryll Lewis already have undergone reconstructive knee surgery and are out for the season. Strong safety Bubba McDowell missed the second half of the 26-17 victory at Pittsburgh with a bruised left patella tendon. Ryan won't know about McDowell's availability until game day. Ryan blames the offense for the injuries to Robertson and McDowell. "What's happened to us the last two weeks is we've gone on the field again at the end of the half and lost a defensive back when he shouldn't have been out there," Ryan says, meaning the offense should have controlled the ball at the end of the half and run out the clock.

Slaughter's season over: The 49ers defense can breathe a sigh of relief because it won't have to face Webster Slaughter, the leading receiver in the AFC. Slaughter suffered torn knee ligaments against the Steelers and is out for the season. Gary Wellman

replaces him. . . . Al Del Greco has connected on four field goals in each of the past three games to give him a team-record 116 points. He also set a record with 26 field goals. What makes both records unusual is that he didn't even attempt a field goal during one three-game stretch. —JOHN MCCLAIN

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS



W-L: 4-10 PLACE: 4th

Patriot jinx: Since moving to Indianapolis in 1984, the Colts have never won both games in a season against the Patriots. In fact, the Colts are 5-14 against

New England in that span, including the 9-6 victory October 31. The Colts can break the jinx Sunday in Foxboro, where they have two victories and an overtime loss in their last



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Down Pat: George has twice passed for 300 yards against the Patriots.

three games. . . . Jeff George has six career 300-yard passing games, and two have come against New England. Interestingly, when George throws for more than 300 yards, the Colts are 1-5, including 0-2 against New England. . . . A big key for the Colts will be stopping Leonard Russell, something they did well in the first meeting. The Colts' defense is last in the league against the run, and only one team this year hasn't gained at least 100 yards on the ground against them — New England. The Patriots were limited to 87 yards, including 39 yards on 10 carries by Russell.

Sack talk: The pass rush will once again be the telling point for the Colts. In nine of their first 13 games, the Colts had one or no sacks, and they are 2-7 in those games. When they get two sacks or more, they are 2-2. In the past 10 years, three of the Colts' top five sack performances have come against the Patriots. In fact, two of them have come in their previous two trips to Foxboro. In each of the past two seasons, the Colts have registered eight sacks in New England. . . . The fewest sacks by the Colts in a season in the past 10 years is 24 in 1986. The Colts had 17 in their first 13 games. —TERRY HUTCHENS

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS



W-L: 10-4 PLACE: 1st

Montana report: Add another Joe Montana injury to the ledger this week — a minor concussion sustained in the third quarter of the Chiefs' come-from-

behind victory against San Diego. Montana, who had played three consecutive games without injury, suffered the concussion when he was hit while throwing. Though woozy, he stayed in the game after a timeout and threw a touchdown pass to give the Chiefs the lead. He then sat out two series while undergoing tests, before finishing the game — with a headache. He is expected to play Sunday night at Minnesota, where the Chiefs can wrap up the AFC West. "That's why doctors are there, because the players always think they can get back any time," Montana says. "I kept trying to get back out, and they kept trying to hold me. They were asking me plays and formations and who I threw the touchdown to. But I was fine."

Hanging 10: The Chiefs have won at least 10 games for the fourth consecutive season. "Ten games is nothing to us anymore," defensive end Neil Smith says. "You have to think big, and when you think big, big things will happen to you. Right now, we're thinking about winning it all, but we need to take care of one responsibility at a time." Smith leads the NFL in sacks with a personal-best 15, and he would like nothing better than to win the sack race. "I was banged up earlier in the season and got off to a slow start," Smith says. "I'm healthy now, and it's not how you start the race. My attitude is, I've got the lead now, so I want to win it." —RANDY COVITZ

LOS ANGELES RAIDERS



W-L: 9-5 PLACE: T2nd

Run to darkness: The Raiders' up-and-down running attack is down — and almost out — heading into Sunday's important game at Green Bay. The Raiders

gained only 17 net yards rushing against a mediocre Buccaneers defense last Sunday, averaging 0.7 yards per carry. They defeated the Bucs, 27-20, but only because of the passing arm of quarterback Jeff Hostetler (19 of 30 for 260 yards) and the legs of their speedy receivers. Hostetler's 1-yard touchdown run, his team-record fifth rushing TD of the season, was the highlight of a ground attack that has accounted for 76 net yards over the last two games. With starting tailback Greg Robinson out following knee surgery, Nick Bell gained 14 yards on seven carries and Napoleon McCallum, playing for the first time after undergoing an appendectomy, gained 16 on six carries. If the weather is bad Sunday, a likely prospect at Green Bay this time of the year, the Raiders may be forced to stay on the ground. And that could prove disastrous.

Getting his kicks: Hostetler isn't the only Raider enjoying a record-breaking season. Kicker Jeff Jaeger kicked two more field goals last Sunday and brought his season total to 31, a personal and team record. Jae-

ger, who had locked a personal-best 29 field goals in 1991, has scored 117 points, tying the club mark set by George Blanda in 1968. ... The penalty-filled game against the Bucs lasted 3 hours, 32 minutes. The Bucs were penalized 13 times for 85 yards, the Raiders 12 times for 102. —STEVE SPENGLER

MIAMI DOLPHINS



W-L: 9-5 PLACE: 2nd

Q.B. controversy: When Don Shula benched Scott Mitchell in favor of Steve DeBerg in the third quarter of the 47-34 loss to the Bills, he gave birth

to a quarterback controversy leading into Monday night's game at San Diego. "I'll make whatever decision I have to make as the week moves on," Shula says, declining to name a starter. "I'll give them both an opportunity to line up and then I'll decide." ... The knee injury that ended Troy Vincent's season never should have happened. Instead, he should have been celebrating a spectacular punt return after a gummi pitch from O.J. McDuffie to the Miami cornerback. "If Troy had run out wide like we expected instead of cutting up inside a David Griggs block," special teams coach Mike Westhoff says, "he would have gotten in the end zone untouched." Vincent apparently saw a seam down the middle and as he headed for it was upended by Pittsburgh's Larry Griffin. Griffin's shoulder smashed into Vincent's right knee.

Word war: Bryan Cox and Shula traded obscenities during the loss to Buffalo when the linebacker was benched with 4:56 to play. This after he had argued with officials after being fined \$5,000 by the NFL for doing the same things in the final moments of the New York loss the week before. Cox says the league will hear from his lawyers. "After the season is over I'm going to see where this has all led. I want to see where I'm at and where I want to be." Does that include the possibility of retiring? "Damn right. That's exactly what I'm talking about." —ARMANDO SALGADO

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



W-L: 3-11 PLACE: 5th

Upwardly mobile: As the season winds down, the Patriots finally are getting wound up. They played their most impressive game of the season last Sunday, beating the Browns, 20-17, at Cleveland. "We're doing things that teams do," Coach Bill Parcells says. "Don't get me wrong. We're a long way from what I want us to be. But these weren't the Cincinnati Bengals we beat. This was a formidable AFC opponent, and we were playing on the road. We've been on an even keel with some of the better teams but came up short. Today, finally, we got one against one of the better teams in the AFC. That's why I'm excited for the players." ... The Patriots allowed one sack, ending a string of 14 sackless quarters. The point total was the highest since October 10, when they defeated the Cardinals, 23-21.

Going, going ... The Patriots' two-game



Crunch time: Buffalo's Bruce Smith sacks DeBerg, whose status as starter is in Shula's hands.

winning streak bodes well for the short term. But the long term concerns the fans. The political community has taken hard stands against a domed stadium, and Owner James Orthwein has said that a downtown megaplex is mandatory to keep the Patriots in the New England area. The lack of a megaplex and the demand for a team in Orthwein's native St. Louis make the Patriots' New England future questionable. ... Parcells denies rumors that have linked him to several groups reportedly interested in keeping the team in New England. "I unequivocally am not part of any group trying to buy the team," he says. "I don't want to be an owner. I will never be part of a group." —KEVIN MAZUR

NEW YORK JETS



W-L: 8-6 PLACE: 3rd

Riches at Rich? The Jets return Sunday to the scene of their most emotional victory in many years — Buffalo's Rich Stadium. A year ago, the Jets upset the

Bills, 24-17, the week after Dennis Byrd was hurt. They dedicated the game to Byrd and ended a 10-game losing streak to the Bills. The Jets, 1-2 in December, are fighting for their playoff lives. "We've got two games to play, and it's going to take 10 (victories) to get in," Coach Bruce Coslet says. After a terrific start, the offense has gone AWOL, producing only 22 points in the last four games. It went 17 quarters without a touchdown before reaching the end zone last Saturday in a 28-7 loss to Dallas.

A poke at the Cowboys: Coslet accused Dallas Coach Jimmy Johnson of disregarding NFL etiquette. Late in the game, with the Cowboys ahead by 21, Johnson called for a double-safety blitz. Boomer Esiason was crushed after releasing a pass and had to leave the game with bruised ribs. Coslet was angry, and let Johnson know it as they walked off the field. Coslet says he was "a little perturbed" that Johnson would "try to knock Boomer out of the game." Esiason is expected to start in Buffalo. Johnson laughed it

off. "Someone needs to pass me a note or give me the rule when we are supposed to blitz and when we can't blitz." ... After last Saturday's opening kickoff, Jets special teamer Steve DeOssie ran to the Cowboys' sideline. Old habits die hard. DeOssie used to play for the Cowboys. —RICH CIMINI

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

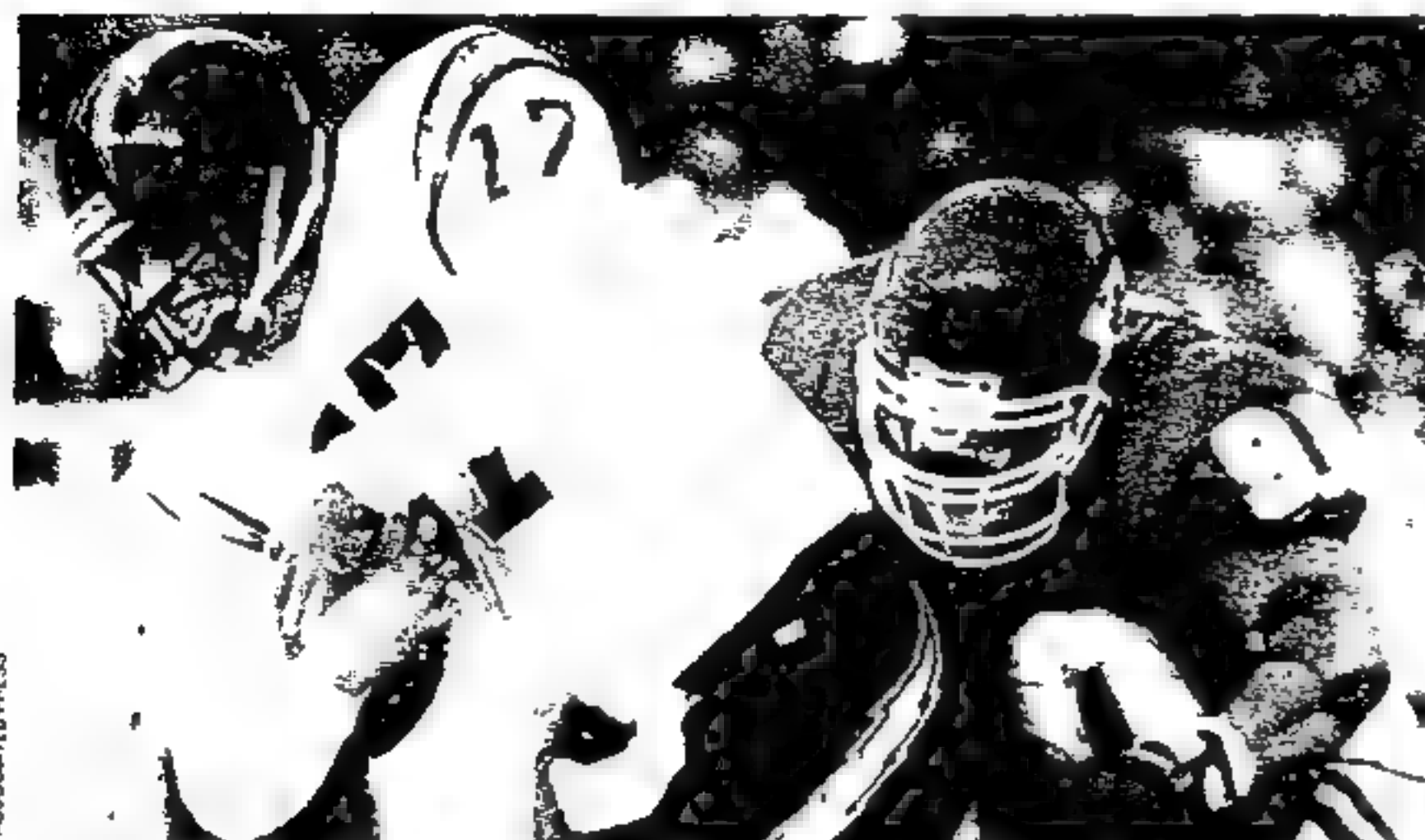


W-L: 8-6 PLACE: 2nd

Playoff predicament: The Steelers didn't do their playoff hopes much good with a 26-17 home loss to Houston that clinched the AFC Central title for the Oil-

ers. Now the Steelers must win at Seattle on Sunday to have any shot at a playoff spot in the finale against the Browns. ... It has not helped matters that the Steelers keep losing key players to injury. Barry Foster has elected to have surgery on his injured left ankle and is out for the season. Linebacker Greg Lloyd injured his hamstring against the Oilers. Coach Bill Cowher calls it a "pretty significant injury." And quarterback Neil O'Donnell hobbled for most of the second half with a strained hip muscle until he took himself out.

Life without Foster: The Steelers were not happy that Foster decided to seek a medical opinion other than the one he received from team doctors. But after visiting with Pittsburgh orthopedic specialist Dr. Freddie Fu, an MRI exam revealed that Foster had a tear in the connective tissue that holds the tendon in place. The tendon was flapping against his ankle bone, causing extreme pain. Foster decided to have surgery. The Steelers say he should have waited. ... The Steelers resumed contract talks with several veteran players, including tight end Eric Green, in an attempt to beat the December 23 deadline for saving room under next year's salary cap. "All we want is a fair deal," says Green, who can become an unrestricted free agent at the end of the season. Asked if that meant around \$2 million annually, Green says, "No, that's peanuts." —GERRY DULAC



Sack time: Chiefs defensive end Neil Smith heads Friesz off at the pass in the first quarter of Sunday's game at Arrowhead Stadium.

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS



W-L: 6-8 PLACE: 4th

Hello, Miami: The Chargers have been pointing to Monday night's game with the Dolphins since this season's schedule was released. The Dolphins

yanked the Chargers' glass slipper from their 1992 Cinderella season in the divisional playoff game. The Chargers fell, 31-0, at Joe Robbie Stadium. Now the Chargers — who were officially eliminated from postseason in their 28-24 loss to Kansas City, after leading, 17-0 — want revenge. "There is something to play for there," linebacker Junior Seau says. "Monday night is going to be our Super Bowl. That is something we have been looking forward to and something I'm excited about." ... Quarterback Stan Humphries suffered a concussion in Sunday's loss and was replaced by John Friesz. Humphries is expected back Monday night. ... Rookie Joe Cocozzo starts at right guard the rest of the season. Joe Mihuchuk (knee) had cartilage surgery last week. ... H-back Derrick Walker (knee) also is out. He underwent an operation this week and was replaced by Alfred Pupunu.

Plummer shines: Seau hogs most of the headlines, but another Chargers linebacker is having a fine season — Gary Plummer. Plummer, who turns 34 before the Super Bowl, is among the team's fittest and most consistent players. Plummer is in his eighth NFL season after spending three years in the USFL. He has a career-high two interceptions this season and 77 tackles, second to Seau's 110. "Gary probably trains better in the offseason than anyone on our football team," Coach Bobby Ross says. —JAY PARIS

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

W-L: 5-9 PLACE: 5th

Here's a switch: During their 2-14 season, Seahawks defenders were admired for playing well and hard with no support from the offense. Could the offense

have surpassed the defense? In a 30-27 overtime loss to Phoenix, quarterback Rick Mirer

directed a 90-yard touchdown drive to give the Seahawks a lead with 1:22 left. A shell-shocked defense, which allowed 476 yards and 362 yards in the past two games, blew that lead. "What I'd like to say is that this can't be happening," free safety Eugene Robinson says. "But it's happening." The Seahawks are allowing 325 yards a game, 40 more than last season. They surrendered 24 or more points in six of their past nine games. Each of the pure cornerbacks is playing with injuries. And with Cortez Kennedy double-teamed, there is no pass rush.

Going nowhere fast: Cornerback James Jefferson, a 30-year-old backup, suffered the biggest career embarrassment when the Seahawks needed experienced cornerbacks the most. With starters Dwayne Harper and Patrick Hunter sidelined with injuries, Jefferson was bypassed by a rookie (Carlton Gray), a safety (Dave McCloughan) and seldom used first-year player (Brian Allred) during Steve Beuerlein's 436-yard passing day. Jefferson might not be re-signed when he becomes an unrestricted free agent after the season. ... His ankles healthy again, Chris Warren will race Thurman Thomas for the AFC rushing title. The 168-yard game against the Cardinals leaves Warren 72 behind Thomas' 1,144. —JOHN CLAYTON

ATLANTA FALCONS



W-L: 6-8 PLACE: 3rd

Broussard's back: Virtually forgotten until the last couple of weeks, Steve Broussard has emerged to challenge Erric Pegram for the starting running back job. Pegram remains among the NFL's leading rushers, but he gained only 20 yards on eight carries last week in a 30-17 loss at Washington. Broussard, who went into the game with 42 yards, carried 26 times for a career-high 162 yards. "I still think Pegram's the starter, and I'm not going to cause any animosity between us," he says. "I'll go with the flow." The flow Sunday at Cincinnati will likely see Broussard get a lot of playing time.

Cloudy future: With the Falcons assured of their third non-winning regular season in four years under Jerry Glanville, team management will have to consider a coaching change. The Falcons invested heavily in free agency and expected at least to contend for a division

title. Instead, the Falcons opened the season with five consecutive losses and blew opportunities to get back into the playoff race by losing to Tampa Bay at home and to Washington on the road. On the positive side, the Falcons have won six of their last nine games. Falcons President Taylor Smith is mum on the prospect of changes. ... Chris Hinton is having an outstanding season after moving back to his natural position of guard. "I don't get involved in the Pro Bowl," Glanville says, "but if he doesn't go, there's a crime." Hinton has been a Pro Bowl selection seven times and is the only player to start the game at three positions. If he makes it this year as a right guard, he will be playing his fourth position. —TONY FARRIZO

CHICAGO BEARS



W-L: 7-7 PLACE: T 3rd

Wounded but alive:

The Bears, who play host to the Lions before winding up the regular season in L.A. vs. the Rams, still have a shot at the playoffs — but only if the offense gets going. Jim Harbaugh is slated to start at quarterback against the Lions after missing a game with a bruised hand. "We are wounded badly now in this playoff hunt," Coach Dave Wannstedt says. "I told our team that we are not out of it. We have got two games left, and that is where our focus will be." ... Leading receiver Tom Waddle (42 catches) suffered a pulled left hamstring and likely is out for the season.



Bearing down: Chicago sack master Dent apparently has free agency in his future.

International plans: The Bears are being considered for an overseas preseason game next August, says Pete Abitante, NFL director of international public relations. They last played overseas in August 1990, when they met the 49ers in Berlin's Olympic Stadium. "We are far away from making a final decision. It probably won't be announced until after the Super Bowl," Abitante says. ... The agent for defensive end Richard Dent says he has had lunch with Bears front-office officials but has had no success in getting a contract extension for his client. "They are

making an expensive mistake," attorney Tim Wright says. The Bears granted Dent the right to become a free agent after this season when he threatened to hold out of training camp in July. But Dent, 33, is having one of his best seasons, with a team-high 12½ sacks, 55 tackles (40 solos), one interception and three passes defended. He is being paid \$1.2 million this year. —FRED MITCHELL

DALLAS COWBOYS



W-L: 10-4 PLACE: 2nd

Trap setters: Fourteen games later, the Cowboys finally meet the club that let the cat out of the bag. It was the Redskins in the season opener who introduced

to the rest of the league the trap block against the aggressive Cowboys defensive front. The Redskins weren't going to put up with any more cat-quick Cowboys defensive linemen firing indiscriminately into the gaps to muck up their running game. So the Redskins began trapping the Cowboys, blindsiding them with pulling guards and tackles to open gaping holes. And the rest of the league followed suit, one reason for the former No. 1 defense's falling into the teens this season. And when the Cowboys adjusted for the traps, asking their undersized linemen to sit in holes, they were blown off the line of scrimmage. Well, last week against the Jets, the Cowboys stopped sitting and attacked. "We just threw that out of our minds," tackle Russell Maryland says. "If they're going to trap, so be it." The once-again attacking Cowboys held the Jets to 81 yards rushing and feature back Johnny Johnson to 42 yards.

Contract chatter: Both sides of the renegotiation of Troy Aikman's contract seem upbeat over the possibility of getting it done and pouring a few cap-saving dollars into the 1993 season. And it certainly did not hurt matters last week when Fox poured an estimated \$300 million a year into the NFL bank for the rights to broadcast NFC games. That will put the salary cap in the \$35-million range and should lessen the burden on club owners to pinch pennies. —MICKY SPAGNOLA

DETROIT LIONS



W-L: 8-8 PLACE: T 1st

Time dwindles: Coach Wayne Fontes has three games to save his job, and he might have to win all three, including a first-round playoff game. Owner William

Clay Ford has to be humiliated by the way his team was trashed, 55-17, by the 49ers in the Silverdome, the Lions' worst loss in that stadium. That defeat will stick in Ford's craw for the rest of the season, and he will keep asking himself, "How far are we from winning the Super Bowl?" Fontes always has been able to soothe the owner's anxiety by saying, "We're getting better." Mostly, that's been true. The Lions have improved greatly since Fontes took over in 1989, but the team hasn't shown the talent or grit to beat the elite teams in the league. The only way Fontes can turn the tide in his favor is by winning the final two games and capturing the division

title, then winning a playoff game. If Fontes and his troops can't knock off a heavyweight in the playoffs, Ford may be inclined to make a switch to a head coach — anybody say Mike Ditka? — who knows what it takes to push a team over the top.

No return: If Barry Sanders hasn't signed a new contract by the December 23 deadline, don't expect to see him play again this season — and that includes the playoffs. Sanders had threatened to walk out earlier this season if he wasn't signed. Now that he's nursing a sprained knee, there's no way he's going to rush back. . . . The Lions had hoped to get safety Bennie Blades (ankle) back by this week, but now they fear he won't return until 1994. —TOM KOWALSKI

GREEN BAY PACKERS



W-L: 8-6 PLACE: T 1st

Motor City rumble: Despite blowing a prime opportunity to win a playoff berth last week, the Packers know exactly what they have to do to make it to the

postseason. No matter what happens beforehand, if they beat the Lions on January 2 in Pontiac, Mich., they are headed for the playoffs. A victory in that game would guarantee them tiebreaker advantages over Detroit and Chicago for a wild card berth. The Packers can win the division title by beating the Raiders on Sunday and the Lions the following week. . . . This week, the Packers can clinch a playoff berth if they beat the Raiders and Minnesota loses to Kansas City. . . . Inside linebacker George Koonce (foot) is questionable heading into the Raiders' game. He was injured in the first quarter of the 21-17 loss to the Vikings. Although X-rays were negative, Koonce could be out for a while. After his fill-in, James Willis, also got hurt, outside linebacker Bryce Paup had to take over. Paup probably will start inside this week.

Looking Sharpe: Wide receiver Sterling Sharpe reached a milestone last week when he tied Don Hutson for the No. 2 spot on the Packers' career receiving list. With 488 catches, Sharpe trails leader James Lofton by 42 receptions. Sharpe needs nine receptions in his last two games to surpass last year's record-setting 108-catch season. . . . The Packers have given up only two individual 100-yard rushing performances. The Saints' Derek Brown had 106 yards November 14 and the Vikings' Scottie Graham had 139 last weekend. —TOM SILVERSTEIN

LOS ANGELES RAMS



W-L: 4-10 PLACE: 4th

No offense. . . : The Rams continued to struggle behind quarterback T.J. Rubley, dropping a 15-3 decision last Sunday to the lowly Bengals. But they

have not given up hope for at least one more 1993 victory. The Browns will come to Anaheim on Sunday after seeing their playoff hopes dashed by the lowly Patriots. The Browns might have trouble summoning enough emotion to contain Jerome Bettis, who leads the NFL in rushing. . . . Executive Vice President John Shaw says the Rams are



Staying put: Slater says he'll even accept a pay cut to stay with the Rams.

not using the rejected expansion cities as leverage to get concessions on their lease at Anaheim Stadium. He says they simply are interested in finding out if the stadium can be modified to include such revenue enhancements as premium seating and extra skyboxes. "The economic disparity between some of the new facilities and the existing revenue streams in Anaheim are so great," Shaw says, "that we're going to have to make a decision at some time as to whether this situation. . . would ever allow us to be competitive."

Good news: Tackle Jackie Slater could be back with the Rams for a 19th season. Rather than wait until after the season, Slater announced he wants to return — welcome news to Coach Chuck Knox. Slater even went so far as to hint he might be willing to take a pay cut. . . . There's a silver lining to the offensive line's injury problems. Rookies Darryl Ashmore (tackle), Keith Lonerker (guard), Chuck Belin (guard) and Brad Fichtel (center) have made big progress since stepping into the weekly rotation. —JIM THOMAS

MINNESOTA VIKINGS



W-L: 7-7 PLACE: T 3rd

What's the word? Back in September, this Chiefs-Vikings game shaped up as the showdown between running back Barry Word and his former club. Vikings

officials thought they had come up with a steal when they acquired Word before the season for a fifth-round choice next year. After a decent start, Word got in trouble for fumbling. Then coaches privately questioned the intensity with which he was running. Word believes a rebuilt offensive line, which opened fewer holes two months ago than it does now, was a factor in his slippage. Bottom line: Word has one carry the last two weeks and that fifth-round pick is looking better and better in Kansas City, where Marcus Allen is making fans forget Word and Christian Okoye. . . . Jim McMahon is 6-3 in games in which he plays a half, and the Vikings are 1-4 in the remaining games. He hurt his foot late last week but should start his 11th game vs. KC. "If we don't win, we're dead," McMahon says.

Front and Center: Dennis Green was 6-2 this season in games against the Central Division, making him 13-3 against the division in two seasons. He is 8-0 against the Bears and the Packers. "We view Chicago and Green Bay as our two main rivals," Green says. "That's where the tradition is." . . . Now that the salary cap is swelling after the Fox coup, the Vikings should be able to afford Pro Bowl nose tackle Henry Thomas and offensive guard Randall McDaniel. Thomas, though, might end up playing elsewhere. —CURT BROWN

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS



W-L: 7-6 PLACE: 2nd

Mora safe for now: Owner Tom Benson, though not pleased by the club's 2-6 skid entering last Monday's game against the Giants, says he won't evaluate Coach

Jim Mora or make other management decisions relating to the post-Jim Finks era until after the season. The team's midseason slump is its worst in eight seasons under Mora. Though Benson has given no indication that he is contemplating a coaching change at season's end, he is reluctant to discuss Mora's future. Benson: "Jim is a winner, and he's dedicated to winning. He's an outstanding coach. But I'm not going to get into Jim Mora."

Bagged: The Saints' slump, after three consecutive playoff appearances, inspired some angry fans to wear bags over their heads in the team's 23-20 loss to the Rams on December 12, a situation reminiscent of 1980, when the Saints finished 1-15. . . . Chris Port has returned to the starting lineup at left guard after missing one game with a hamstring injury. Port was replaced against the Rams by Jim Dombrowski, whom Port beat out for the position in training camp. Port earns \$250,000 this season; Dombrowski \$3.4 million. . . . The Saints added safety Shane Pahukoa to their developmental squad. Pahukoa, a 6-foot-2, 202-pound rookie from Washington, had three interceptions for the Saints in preseason before being cut August 24. . . . Defensive end Frank Warren was placed on injured reserve after undergoing surgery on the arch in his right foot December 14. Pig Goff has assumed Warren's position at right end. —MIKE STROM

NEW YORK GIANTS



W-L: 10-3 PLACE: 1st

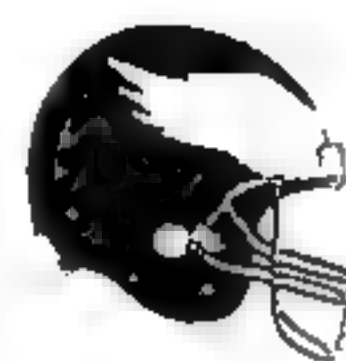
Wait and hope: The Giants have missed starting left tackle Jumbo Elliott in four of the last five games and don't know when they'll get him back. Elliott under-

went an epidural injection of steroids last week to shrink two bulging disks and settle the case of back spasms that started December 8. Elliott has had a chronic back condition the past five years but has never missed this much time in the regular season because of it. Surgery is an option, but it is not imminent. The Giants are willing to wait out the spasms in hopes of having their 305-pound blocker ready for the playoffs if not sooner. In the meantime, the Giants actually de-emphasize part of the playbook in Elliott's ab-

sence. "There are certain things you try to go to when Jumbo's in there," offensive coordinator George Henshaw says. "You have to realize that when he's playing well, he can be a dominant lineman. There's not too many guys who are going to whip him when he's healthy and on his game." Eric Moore replaced Elliott.

Quarterback rotation: Kent Graham and Dave Brown will alternate as quarterback Phil Simms' primary backup the rest of the season. Brown served as No. 2 Monday in New Orleans after Graham took 12 of the previous 13 games as primary. The reason is to avoid a problem should Simms get hurt. The move has further implications, however. As a supplemental-round draft pick last year, Brown represents a sizable financial commitment on the Giants' part. They need to see what he can do. —ERNE PALLADINO

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES



W-L: 6-8 PLACE: 3rd

Sign of the times: The Eagles are making a desperate attempt to sign potential free agents Seth Joyner and Clyde Simmons to contract extensions. The

team offered each player a four-year, \$10-million deal, including a \$1.5-million adjustment to his 1993 salary. Simmons rejected the Eagles' offer and countered with a three-year, \$10.5-million proposal. Joyner rejected the Eagles' offer, too, and countered with three-year, \$9.6-million proposal. "Both guys could get more on the open market," says Jim Soiano, the agent for both players. "But they are willing to take a little less to stay in Philadelphia and stay together." Joyner and Simmons, who are best friends, want to play on the same team. "We came in together, we'd like to finish our careers together," Joyner says.

No gamble with Randall: Randall Cun-



Wait till next year: It's official: Cunningham will see no more action this season.

ningham isn't fully healed from his leg injury and will not play again this season. "I had tears in my eyes because you never want to be told you can't play," Cunningham says. "But I can accept it. It's the right decision." Cunningham says his fractured left fibula will be fully healed in another month. . . . Owner Norman Braman says team President Harry Gamble will remain in charge of the football operation. Braman says the Eagles are considering adding a personnel executive but that the new hire would work under Gamble. Braman has been outspoken in his criticism of the Eagles' recent personnel decisions, but Braman blames his team's 1993 woes on injuries. —PHIL ANASTASIA



Embracing victory: Garth Jax, left, hugs Greg Davis after his 41-yard field goal in overtime on Sunday defeated the Seahawks.

PHOENIX CARDINALS

W-L: 5-9 PLACE: 4th

Revenge: The Cardinals will be seeking revenge in more ways than one when they face the Giants on Sunday. After losing at New York, 19-17, November

28 on a last-second field goal, quarterback Steve Beuerlein and his teammates were heading toward the locker room when Giants running back Dave Meggett ran past them, shouted an obscenity and sprinted into his locker room. Beuerlein took it as a slap in the face. "I made the point to tell the New York (media) I hope that the Giants have something on the line, which I'm sure they will," Beuerlein says. "We will remember that. He was just kicking us while we were down. He rubbed it in our face and then ran into the locker room and hid out." ... With their 30-27 overtime victory at Seattle, the Cardinals equaled Coach Joe Bugel's best season — five victories as a rookie coach in 1990.

Changing of the guard: Two days after the

Cardinals assured themselves a ninth consecutive losing season, General Manager Larry Wilson resigned to take another position within the organization. Wilson, the team's general manager since 1988, says the decision to step down was his own and that he made the move because he "was worn down" and had lost "confidence." "I don't want to stand in the way of this organization being a winner," he says. The next question is whether Bugel, 18-44 in his fourth year, will be fired at the end of the season, a likelihood the coach refuses to accept. "I'll never waver on that, not until somebody tells me different," he says. —LLOYD HENSEN

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS



W-L: 10-4 PLACE: 1st

Lofly territory: The 49ers go into their final two games of the season with a chance to finish in some rarefied offensive territory. After their 55-17 demolition of Detroit, the team's averages stood at 30.9 points and 401.5 yards a game. Since the 1970 merger of the NFL and AFL, only two teams (San Diego in 1982 and Miami in 1984) have averaged at least 30 points and 400 yards in a season. ... The 49ers were close to agreement on four-year extensions with tackles Harris Barton and Steve Wallace. The numbers would be around \$9 million each, including \$2 million each paid as a retroactive 1993 increase to beat the salary cap. ... Fullback Tom Rathman returned to the starting lineup against Detroit, his first start since he separated his shoulder in the opener, and he scored two TDs on short runs. Coach George Seifert named Rathman to return to the lineup in mid-week. Then Marc Logan, who had played well while Rathman was hurt, suffered a pulled calf muscle in practice. ... The 49ers hope to have running back Ricky Watters, who missed two games with a knee injury, back for their Christmas Day game against Houston.

Bono gets in: Critics have been saying backup quarterback Steve Bono should get some playing time, to remain sharp and because of the numerous hard hits on Steve Young. So against Detroit, Young came out seven minutes into the second half and Bono finished up. Not because of any hard hits but because the 49ers led, 45-10. Young has not missed a play because of injury all season. —IRA MILLER

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS



W-L: 4-10 PLACE: 5th

Last-place blues:

What had been inevitable finally became reality last Sunday as the Bucs clinched fifth place in the NFC Central in a 27-20 loss to the Raiders. In the 17 seasons Tampa Bay has been a resident of that division, it has finished last 11 times. ... Middle linebacker Hardy Nickerson, ejected with 10:01 to play for shoving an official, could face a fine and/or suspension for the incident. But Nickerson denies he shoved the official and Coach Sam Wyche



Starting again: Rathman started his first game since being injured in the 49ers' opener.

says someone shoved him into the official. The shame about all this is Nickerson's post-play activity might hurt his chances of making the Pro Bowl. Nickerson had eight tackles, giving him a team-record 183. ... The injury-plagued offensive line suffered another blow when right guard Ian Beckles was lost for the last two games with a sprained right knee. Beckles was one of four starters on offense (with Tony Mayberry, Scott Dill and

Ron Hall) who had started every game. Charles McRae replaces Beckles.

Forgotten man: Outside linebacker Broderick Thomas has become the team's forgotten man. Two years after making a team-record 174 tackles, Thomas rarely steps onto the field. The Bucs probably will shop him around, but his value definitely has dropped and teams might wait until he is waived before entering the final year of a contract that will pay \$1.25 million. ... The Bucs extended Dill's contract through 1994 with an \$800,000 salary. Dill, who has started at left and right tackle and left guard, was voted the team's unsung player. —NICK PUGLIESE

WASHINGTON REDSKINS



W-L: 4-10 PLACE: 5th

The rematch: When the Redskins beat the Cowboys, 35-16, in the Monday night opener, they never dreamed they would go into the rematch with a 4-10

record. The Redskins are given little chance of duplicating the victory Sunday in Dallas, but it's still a big one for Redskins fans. Safety Danny Copeland says, "There are some things that can still be done in this season. I was in the parking lot coming in (for the Atlanta game) and a guy says, 'You guys are going to play our Super Bowl next week.' You know what that means. If we can beat the Cowboys, it's like a winning season."

Saving a job? The Redskins' 30-17 victory over the Falcons might have helped save Coach Richie Petitbon's job. Owner Jack Kent Cooke was hugging his wife after the game in the owner's box as if the team had just won a Super Bowl. Monte Coleman, who had eight tackles, two sacks, a forced fumble, a recovered fumble, an interception and a touchdown, threw his support behind Petitbon. "He's a good coach. If his job was in jeopardy, I didn't know anything about it. I'm all for Richie because he's been around as long as I've been around." ... If Petitbon stays, offensive coordinator Rod Dowhower could be the scapegoat because the offense has struggled all season. ... Quarterback Mark Rypien says the team might already have decided to get rid of him and his \$3-million salary. However, Petitbon says no decision has been made on Rypien's future. ... Atlanta is 0-9 in regular-season games in Washington. —VITO STELLINO

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Basketball Free Agents
that can be claimed after 2 PM on Mon., Dec. 27th and before 11PM on Sun., Jan. 2nd, and be on your team starting Mon. Jan 3rd.

P	ID	Player/Team	Salary
G	128	John Starks, New York	\$2,322,000
G	180	Avery Johnson, Golden State	\$890,000
F	355	Nate McMillan, Seattle	\$1,670,000
F	416	Don MacLean, Washington	\$510,000
C	505	Alonzo Mourning, Charlotte	\$4,000,000

BASKETBALL Overall Leaders thru Dec. 13

1	Tony Delo	Winnipeg, MA	28398
2	Scott Burdette	Atlanta, GA	25838
3	Shay Doss	N. Hollywood, CA	25328
4	Beth Leslie	San Diego, CA	25321
5	Jeff Schwartz	Greenfield, WI	25171
6	Martin Sawyer	York, ME	25113
7	Gary Myers	Citrus Heights, CA	25007
8	Tim Cassidy	Orlando, FL	24990
9	Don Thurman	El Paso, TX	24787
10	Don Eberhardt	Brook Park, OH	24781

Hockey Free Agents
that can be claimed after 9AM on Friday, Dec. 24th, and before 11PM on Thursday, Dec. 30th, and be on your team for games starting Friday, Dec. 31st.

P	ID	Player/Team	Salary
G	18	Mike Richter, NY Rangers	\$2,380,000
C	118	Alexei Zhamnov, Winnipeg	\$1,670,000
W	323	Dave Andreychuk, Toronto	\$1,610,000
W	442	Valek Kamenyik, Quebec	\$730,000
D	638	Kan Danyko, New Jersey	\$1,240,000
D	730	Dave Babych, Vancouver	\$450,000

HOCKEY Overall Leaders thru Dec. 9th

1	Chris Demetrio	Mississauga, ONT	8735
2	Todd Rathgeber	Regina, SASK	8472
3	Rand Garland	Edmonton, NC	8160
4	Rob Vincent	Vancouver, ONT	8108
5	Scott Katsaris	Wayne, NJ	8040
6	Todd Rathgeber	Regina, SASK	8013
7	D. Ryan/M. Mandt	Carleton Place, ONT	8008
8	Kevin Myers	Chatham, NB	8008
9	John Kuter	Schenectady, NY	8003
10	Joel Worob	Wayne, NJ	8003

Football Free Agents
that can be claimed after 2 PM on Tuesday, December 28th, and before 11PM on Sat. Jan 1st, and be on your team for week 18 games.

P	ID	Player/Team	Salary
K	11	Norm Johnson, Falcons	\$2,380,000
QB	124	Jeff Hostetler, Raiders	\$1,600,000
RB	341	Tim Worley, Bears	\$1,000,000
RB	245	Tom Rathman, 49ers	\$890,000
TE	409	Eric Green, Steelers	\$1,110,000
WR	531	Ricky Proehl, Cardinals	\$1,110,000
WR	546	Tom Waddle, Bears	\$870,000

FOOTBALL Division Leaders thru Week 15

1	Dale Stacey	Odesa, TX	
2	Schrocky & Glatte	Manhattan Beach, CA	
3	Hans Lieder	Minneapolis, MN	
4	Rich Kirschum	Manston, ONT	
5	B. Holland / E. Harrop	Grapevine, TX	
6	Wes Karsch	Los Angeles, CA	
7	J. Kerner / M. Siegal	New York, NY	
8	Larry Goldstein	Commack, NY	
9	Quasim / Booth	Thunder Bay, ONT	
10	Russell Margatou	Monterey Park, CA	
11	Kenneth Alderiss	Manhattan Beach, CA	
12	Don Hunt	Orlando, FL	

BASEBALL REPORT

Baseball has plots and subplots but no ending



Peter
PASCARELLI

After a while, you start feeling like Oliver Stone filming "JFK" as you start sorting through the various conspiracy theories that try to explain what's going on in Major League Baseball.

There has never been a more fertile time for such speculation than right now. The owners are lurching toward a showdown on revenue sharing as well as the hiring of a new commissioner. At the same time, the players' association continues to block realignment of the divisions while fanning their congressional sources to give baseball an "in your face" rejection of its antitrust exemption, as if to strain relations even further in advance of negotiations for a new Basic Agreement.

Stories surfaced last week, claiming that Paul Kirk, a respected attorney and former head of the Democratic National Committee, or Harvey Schiller, the president of the U.S. Olympic Committee, was the likely choice as new commissioner. The speculation sent the

impression that the owners were near completion of a feverish search.

But sources close to the process give a far different impression. There are indications that many owners have instead been basically killing time in their commissioner search, trying to persuade Brewers Owner Bud Selig to take the job on a permanent basis while allowing various names to be floated in speculative stories.

Never mind that many baseball people privately believe what the game needs, more than anything, is a commissioner with a business and marketing background, someone who would be equipped to overhaul the game's faulty management machinery. Selig's unifying and patient approach over the past year and a half has impressed enough owners for them to want him to continue on the job.

However, in recent days, the owners have finally been convinced Selig indeed will not change his mind. And all of a sudden comes word that they're down to three candidates.

One of the supposed finalists was former U.S. Attorney General Dick Thornburgh. But sources say he was never a serious contender.

Another was Kirk, a solid candidate. Nevertheless, sources say, Kirk has had no contact with the commissioner search committee in months. What's more, there has been speculation in Washington that Kirk is being considered for a key role in a reorganization of President Clinton's White House staff.

And the third was Schiller, who baseball insiders insisted when his name first surfaced



Dealmaker? Will the Boss (above) agree to revenue sharing if Schiller becomes commissioner?

months ago was being rumored as a candidate only as a favor to Yankees Owner George Steinbrenner, a close friend.

Now there is talk that Schiller is the front-runner. And such talk immediately triggered a perhaps paranoid but eminently believable theory that the fix was in, that in exchange for having his friend become commissioner, Steinbrenner would soften his opposition to revenue sharing and go along with a compromise.

Indeed, a committee on revenue sharing met last week in Chicago. And sources close to that committee claim it hopes to have a plan brought to a vote at a special owners meeting set for January 6. Twenty-one owners' votes are needed to approve a revenue-sharing proposal.

A settlement on revenue sharing would be a huge morale boost for the baseball industry because it would finally open the way for talks with the players, negotiations many privately hope can eventually be accomplished without significant upheaval.

But in the meantime, the players and own-

ers are nearing the point of no return on realignment. The network television fall schedules must be finalized by February. That means the networks must know by then whether there will be the extra round of playoffs, which is part of the realignment decision.

However, the stumbling block remains the players' demand to be paid according to how many postseason games are played. That is unacceptable to many baseball people, who insist the players' share of postseason games must be on a fixed percentage so as to eliminate any suggestion that a playoff series was extended for purely financial benefit.

Meanwhile, the players' union, through some congressional allies, are stirring up the antitrust issue at a time when many senators and congressmen are becoming increasingly impatient with baseball's slow progress toward selecting a new commissioner.

All of which sort of brings this week's installment of "As the Baseball World Turns" full circle.

Rickey's number

Even if the A's hadn't offered slightly more money (roughly \$8.5 million over two years) than the Yankees, Rickey Henderson likely would have opted for a return home for a relatively comparable financial offer.

For all his complaints about his contract and verbal sparring with Athletics General Manager Sandy Alderson, Henderson never really wanted to play anywhere else but his Oakland home. After discovering how little overall interest there was in his services around baseball, Henderson is not likely to whine about his latest contractual deal.

And in an A's lineup that suddenly looks formidable, what with a healthy Mark McGwire, Ruben Sierra, Troy Neel, Terry Steinbach and Brent Gates, Henderson could be rejuvenated. He could be motivated to prove



Happy to be home: Rickey is returning to the A's.

wrong critics who claimed his skills were eroding when he slumped with Toronto down the stretch while playing with an injured hand.

Re-signing Henderson also represents a coup for Alderson, who in effect extracted excellent young pitching prospect Steve Karsay from Toronto in exchange for renting Henderson to the Blue Jays for two months. At the same time, Alderson will be paying Henderson \$1 million more

than last year.

Meanwhile, Florida, which has become skeptical about its chances to re-sign shortstop Walt Weiss, has approached Oakland about young shortstop Kurt Abbott. The Marlins have outfield prospects to offer such as Carl Everett or Kerwin Moore.

Orioles remain busy

Chris Sabo has been checked out physically by the Mets and Orioles. And if the two end up being his choices and the offers are comparable, look for Sabo to opt for the Orioles, who are a contender and play in a better home-run ballpark.

The Orioles are seriously pursuing a quality starting pitcher. They've talked to Philadelphia about Terry Mulholland, with the Phillies seeking Alan Mills or Brad Pennington, relievers the Orioles are reluctant to

relinquish because of the physical uncertainty of Gregg Olson. Baltimore is also still talking to Houston about Pete Harnusch and to San Diego about Andy Benes.

Baltimore has also shopped outfielder Mike Devereaux, with the White Sox having mild interest. Devereaux's \$3 million-plus price tag makes it unlikely he'll go anywhere.

Around the bases

Boston's search for a catcher has turned to inquiring about Houston's Eddie Taubensee. The Red Sox have also inquired about the Phillies' Mulholland. ... California now appears unlikely to deal Chuck Finley or Mark Langston, whom the Angels now have some hope of re-signing and keeping out of free agency. Unless an unexpected deal

materializes, the Angels intend to move Damion Easley from second to third, play Kevin Flora and Spike Owen at second and move Eduardo Perez to left while also waiting for outfield prospect Garret Anderson. And California also thinks lefthander Brian Anderson, its top amateur pick last June, could come along quickly enough to be in their rotation this year. ... The Cubs are shopping pitchers Mike Morgan, Mike Harkey and Greg Hibbard. Hibbard and Morgan both have price tags in excess of \$2 million. The Cubs, meanwhile, are unlikely to be able to move Shawn Dunston, whose medical reports scared off the few clubs interested.

The White Sox remain uncertain about what to do about right field. Shane Mack is not considered an option because of his salary. Chicago could be one of the few division winners to have a lower payroll the year after

winning a title. That's true even after signing Julio Franco, who could be a good D.H. pickup for the White Sox. ... If Baltimore doesn't sign Sabo, one option at third could be a pursuit of the Dodgers' Dave Hansen. ... You have to love some agents. Take Greg Clifton who, in trying to sell David Wells (11-9, 4.19 ERA) to Cleveland, claimed, "David would have won 18 games for Cleveland last year with the Indians' run support." That's interesting because when you look at the official American League stats for 1993, you find out that the Tigers, for whom Wells pitched last year, scored 109 more runs (899 to 790) than Cleveland.

For updates on Peter Pascarelli's TSN Baseball Report, call 1-900-860-4400; 95 cents per minute. Callers under 18 must have permission. The service is accessible from touchtone and rotary phones.

BALTIMORE ORIOLES



Bulpen addition: Free agent Mark Eichhorn was acquired to provide depth in a bullpen that likely will open spring training uncertain about the status of injured stopper Gregg Olson.

Eichhorn doesn't figure to take Olson's place, but he is an experienced middle reliever who can pitch a lot of innings if it becomes necessary to use righthander Alan Mills as the stopper. "I think since Mark Williamson will not be with us, this is a guy who is going to give us some innings," Manager Johnny Oates says. "He's a guy who has been in the trenches and has the versatility to pitch in any situation." No doubt, the Orioles also hope to draw on Eichhorn's experience pitching under pennant race and postseason pressure with the two-time World Champion Blue Jays. Eichhorn indicated he is eager to join them because they have a chance to get back to the playoffs. "I had other teams interested, but the Orioles were a contender," Eichhorn says. "After you get a taste of what we did in Toronto, you want to go where you have a chance to win."

Catching depth: Also acquired was veteran catcher Rich Gedman to provide depth behind the plate. With the release of veteran Mark Parent, Jeff Tackett was the only reserve catcher with any major league experience. Gedman, a two-time All-Star who once was considered one of the top all-around catchers in the game, gives the club another solid defensive catcher. —PETER SCHMUCK

BOSTON RED SOX



No. 2 with a bullet: Manager Butch Hobson is toying with the idea of batting Mike Greenwell second in his lineup behind Otis Nixon. "I spoke to (Greenwell) about it," Hobson says. "He likes

to hit third, but he hit well in the second spot last season (.444 with 4 home runs and 15 RBIs in 28 starts), and it's hard to argue those figures." Hobson says the only spots set in his batting order are the leadoff and cleanup slots, which will go to Nixon and Mo Vaughn. Greenwell will look at Bob Zupcic, Carlos Quintana, Billy Hatcher and even Andre Dawson, who will be 39, as his starting right fielder.

Pitching and catching: After the Red Sox were outbid by the Tigers for the services of free agent David Wells, Vice President Lou Gorman said he will go in another direction in the quest for a No. 5 starter. Toronto righthander Todd Stottlemyre would enter the picture if he isn't tendered a contract by the Blue Jays. Gorman also says he would be interested in any catcher who wasn't tendered a contract but hasn't given up on free agents Brian Harper (he won't give him the three-year deal he's seeking) or David Valle. . . . The Red Sox took switch-hitting second baseman Billy Hall, 25, in the Rule 5 draft. Hall stole 103 bases in three minor league seasons in the Padres' organization. . . . Lefthander Tony Fossas, 37, who appeared in 71 games with the Red Sox, may not be offered a contract but could be signed to a Triple-A deal. —JOE GUALOTTI



Moving up? Greenwell might bat second behind Nixon in the Red Sox's lineup.

CALIFORNIA ANGELS



Next in line: Whitey Herzog is grooming Bill Bavasi, recently promoted from minor league director to assistant general manager, to follow in his footsteps as G.M. "I've

been impressed with this young man from the day I met him," Herzog says. Bavasi, 35, is the son of Buzzie Bavasi, former general manager of the Dodgers, Padres and Angels. . . . Herzog wonders if the pressure of knowing he would file for free agency this winter affected Luis Polonia's production last season. After finishing with a career-low .271 average, Polonia was not re-signed by the Angels. "I wanted to sign him last winter," Herzog says. "People say he had a bad year, but who knows what kind of year he would have had if he'd been signed? Some people play good in their 'walk' year, some don't."

Comeback: Of all the bad things that happened to the Angels last season, nothing compared to the tragedy that befell Kevin Flora, who should have been their starting second baseman when Damion Easley went down with chronic shin splints. He was hitting .359 at Triple-A Vancouver. But Flora, a fleet-footed prospect with occasional power, a reliable bat and a good glove, couldn't accept his call to the big leagues. His wife, MaryAnn, was killed in a car crash in Texas early in the season. Flora gave up on baseball and almost gave up on life. "It's been about as rough as you could get," Flora says. But now he says he's ready to compete for the starting second-base job this spring. —DAVE CUNNINGHAM

CHICAGO WHITE SOX



Franco for cleanup: When the White Sox signed free agent Julio Franco as their D.H. for one year at about \$1 million (with incentives to reach \$2.5 million), it was viewed as a

live-in arrangement for a year. If they don't like each other, they'll split. Franco, the A.L. batting champion in 1991 with a .341 aver-

age, will bat cleanup behind Frank Thomas. "The Sox have a young ballclub that plays to win," says Franco, who hardly played in 1992 because of a knee injury but drove in 84 runs in '93. "Each year their organization does something to upgrade itself. Anything we (Rangers) did to try to beat them, they came up with something to beat us. I'm 32 and I've never been on a winning club. I want to win." Nine White Sox D.H.s combined for 22 home runs and 103 RBIs last season, but they were last in average at .214.

Sax's last chance? The club will give Steve Sax another second-base opportunity, but he will have to beat out incumbent Joey Cora, Craig Grebeck and Norberto Martin. "Maybe being back in it after a year is what he needs to get going again," G.M. Ron Schueler says. Sax made only one regular-season appearance at second. . . . Ozzie Guillen's contract was extended for three years, starting in 1995, for \$12 million with a \$4-million option. . . . The Sox claimed Cardinals outfielder Allen Battle in the Rule 5 draft to compete with Mike Huff for a job as a late-inning defensive replacement. —JOE GORDARO

CLEVELAND INDIANS



Still pitching tight: For now, the proposed trade with the Mets for Bret Saberhagen is in ashes, and David Wells is no longer a viable option in the Indians' search for another starting pitcher.

Wells re-signed with the Tigers, accepting a three-year guaranteed contract for \$7.5 million and can earn an additional \$500,000 if he averages 25 starts a season. Cleveland came in third with an offer of \$6.75 million for three years plus a \$2-million incentive package based on innings pitched. Boston offered a three-year guaranteed contract worth \$7.2 million.

Milligan, Horn deleted: Randy Milligan, removed from the roster and designated for assignment, was dealt to Montreal for a player to be named. Sam Horn, also designated for assignment, was released. The Indians had 10 days to trade, release or induce Horn and Milligan to accept assignments to the minors. Milligan batted .426 with seven RBIs in 47 at-bats for Cleveland. But with Paul Sorrento, Reggie Jefferson and Eddie Murray in front of him, there was no room for another first baseman/designated hitter. . . . The Indians lost catcher Kelly Stunnett, righthander Rafael Valdez and infielder Todd Whitehurst in the Rule 5 draft and picked up lefthanders Dan Magee from Texas and Fred Dabney from the White Sox and first baseman Brian Proctor from the Dodgers. None of the acquisitions has to remain on the major league roster. —SHELDON DICKER

DETROIT TIGERS



Christmas wish: It's little secret what Manager Sparky Anderson wants for Christmas — righthander Bret Saberhagen. Anderson says his team is only one component from serious

contention in the A.L. East: "a premier pitcher. By that, I mean one of the 20 best." Despite being sidelined with various injuries the

last two years with the Mets, Saberhagen, 29, could qualify. He was 7-7 with a 3.29 ERA last season for a horrible team, and righthanders hit only .237 against him. Anderson has been sold on Saberhagen since the Tigers' world-title season of 1984, when Saberhagen, a rookie with the Royals, won his first three decisions against the Tigers and pitched well against them in the playoffs.

Wells back: The team's thin starting pitching forced it to do something it had to think long and hard about — give David Wells a three-year contract. The lefthander had another inconsistent season in 1993, starting 9-1 on the way to an 11-9, 4.19-ERA season. Wells, who was ready to sign a three-year, \$7.5-million deal with the Red Sox, gave the Tigers one last chance to match that offer. . . . Outfielder Dan Gladden, squeezed out of the club's plans with the acquisition of Eric Davis, signed to play in Japan. . . . The Tigers, eager to climb in the merchandising standings, replaced the old logo of a Tiger head with a Tiger jumping through an old English D. They will unveil new road uniforms in February. —RED CREAGER



Not trade bait: McRae says the Royals are not trying to deal Montgomery.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS



Gaetti signs: Third base was a problem for the Royals last season until Gary Gaetti, released by the Angels, was given a shot. Gaetti rejuvenated his career and gave the Royals stability

at the position after Keith Miller was injured and rookie Phil Hiatt slumped. Now Gaetti, who was a free agent, has agreed to return for 1994. It was a bargain hire because virtually all of his \$3-million salary will be paid by the Angels on the last year of a four-year contract. Gaetti gave the Royals power (14 home runs, 46 RBIs in 82 games) and solid defense. He'll enter spring training as the No. 1 third baseman. Although he was signed to a Triple-A contract, that was merely to save a roster spot. The contract is for two years but 1995 is not guaranteed. Gaetti, 35, gives the Royals time for Hiatt to prove he's ready or for Joe Randa, a top minor-leaguer, to develop.

Montgomery penned up: Manager Hal McRae shrugs off rumors that the Royals might trade closer Jeff Montgomery for a much-sought power hitter. Montgomery has

averaged 39 saves the last three seasons and had 45 last season. For two years, there have been reports the Royals might deal Montgomery for Braves outfielders Ron Gant or David Justice. "You wouldn't even consider that," McRae says. . . . McRae, looking to the A.L. Central race: "On paper, I'd have to say it's the White Sox, then Cleveland and then us." —DICK KAESEL

MILWAUKEE BREWERS



No Reimer: As the deadline for offering players arbitration neared, it appeared the Brewers were ready to part with designated hitter Kevin Reimer. A left-handed hitter who

didn't hit a homer and drove in eight RBIs in the second half of the season, Reimer is not a player the Brewers are looking at as a regular in '94. He was paid \$725,000 last year and could get more if he went to arbitration. General Manager Sal Bando says he will consider keeping Reimer, but at a considerably lower price, and Reimer says he isn't inclined to accept a lesser offer if he isn't tendered a contract. Reimer's second half was in direct contrast to what he did before the All-Star break, when he hit 13 homers and drove in 52 runs. The Brewers got Reimer from the Rockies for outfielder Dante Bichette, who hit .310 with 21 homers and 89 RBIs in '93.

Vaughn to D.H.: Bando says the plan is for left fielder Greg Vaughn to be the designated hitter in April when the weather is still questionable. Vaughn had shoulder surgery last fall and should be ready for spring training. Bando, though, doesn't want to take any chances and will ease his power hitter back onto the field. . . . Talks between the Red Sox and Brewers concerning a trade for B.J. Surhoff reached a dead end. Surhoff, who played third base in '93, could be the Opening Day left fielder, assuming he's not traded. Kevin Senter, whom the Brewers picked back up in August, would be at third. —BOB BENGHAUS

MINNESOTA TWINS



Platoon, ho! Unless they trade for a full-time third baseman, the Twins plan on platooning Scott Lewis and Chip Hale there in '94. Lewis, who last season was given the shortstop job

when Greg Gagne went to Kansas City, is recovering nicely from rotator-cuff surgery he had last May. But he will not be able to throw until spring training. He platooned at third in '91 with Mike Pagliarulo and contributed to the Twins' World Series title. And although Pat Meares is expected to be the Opening Day shortstop, Lewis spent his minor league career at shortstop and, at the least, represents insurance in case Meares fails. Although a potential Hale-Lewis platoon probably won't sell many season tickets, Lewis has a championship ring and Hale ranked 10th among all major-leaguers in batting average against righthanded pitching at .341.

Catching on: The Twins tendered contracts to their arbitration-eligible players — pitchers Kevin Tapani and Scott Erickson, second

baseman Chuck Knoblauch and outfielder Pedro Munoz. No Twin has ever resorted to salary arbitration, but Knoblauch could become the first after making only \$510,000 last season. . . . The Twins acquired lefthanded pitcher Keith Garagozza from the Yankees in the Rule 5 draft and could use him as a starter or a reliever. They also acquired former Oriole Chuto Martinez as a free agent and hope he will give their outfield some left-handed power. —JIM SOUHAN

NEW YORK YANKEES



No Rickey: Rickey Henderson apparently couldn't fit under the Yankees' \$45-million salary cap imposed by principal Owner George Steinbrenner, so he will be returning to the Oakland A's next season. Yankees General Manager Gene Michael, who has been hamstrung in talking trade and free-agent signings under Steinbrenner's payroll cap, met for two days last week in southern California with Dennis Gilbert, Henderson's representative, but a deal could not be reached. The Yankees reportedly offered Henderson a one-year, incentive-laden contract with an option and were thought willing to guarantee a second year. Henderson ended up signing a two-year contract worth between \$8 million and \$8.5 million. The departure of Dion James to Japan and the questionable status of Danny Tartabull's surgically repaired right shoulder has put the Yankees in the market for an outfielder. Henderson seemed an ideal fit because of the Yankees' lack of speed, need for a leadoff hitter and possible void in left field.

Draft tidbits: The Yankees lost lefthander Keith Garagozzo, 9-10 last season in Class A and Double A, to the Twins in the Rule 5 draft. In the minor league phase of the draft, the Yankees' Triple-A Columbus affiliate selected righthander Joe Ansano, 28, from the Expos. He pitched for Harrisburg (Eastern) and West Palm Beach (Gulf Coast) in '93 and was a combined 2-0 with six saves and a 1.21 ERA. —JACK O'CONNELL

OAKLAND ATHLETICS



Rickey redux: General Manager Sandy Alderson expects a calmer plot in Act III of Rickey Henderson's life with the A's. Henderson signed a two-year contract last week worth

between \$8 million and \$8.5 million. This time, Alderson says, the bickering between Henderson and the A's will subside. "The break in the relationship was a chance for us to build a new relationship, with a new contract, that puts past disagreements behind us," Alderson says. The A's traded Henderson to Toronto last July 31 after it became apparent they could not meet his contract expectations. Those expectations — originally in the neighborhood of four years and \$20 million — subsequently plunged, allowing the A's to climb back into the picture. Before approving the deal, Alderson and Manager Tony La Russa received assurances that Henderson would not carry old contract



Payday: A long-term contract awaits Olerud.

grudges into his third stint with the team.

Brave decisions: The A's, seeking to plug their biggest hole, have turned to the pitching-rich Braves organization for help. The A's took Carlos Reyes, 24, with the first choice in the Rule 5 draft and signed free agent Bill Taylor, 32. Reyes and Taylor will compete for spots in Oakland's bullpen. . . . Casey Parsons, who managed at Double-A Huntsville the last three seasons, will take over at Triple-A Tacoma. Parsons replaces Bob Boone, who left to become bench coach for the Reds. —RON KROCHICK

SEATTLE MARINERS



Not so fast: The Mariners planned to draft Charlie Hough off the Marlins' Triple-A Edmonton farm club, but because Hough hadn't actually signed the minor league contract, Seattle

had to back off. "We would have drafted him," Manager Lou Piniella says. The Mariners' top priority is to add an established pitcher to the rotation behind Randy Johnson, Chris Bosio and Dave Fleming. Rebuffed in their efforts to get Hough, the Mariners selected righthanded pitcher Mike Hartley in the minor league draft off the Angels' Midland roster. That didn't work, either. The Angels, who signed the free agent last month and then sold him to a Japanese team, didn't notify Major League Baseball officials to take Hartley's name off the Midland roster.

Backup backstop? The winter-meetings draft wasn't a complete loss. Catcher Eric Christopherson was selected off the Giants' Triple-A Phoenix roster for \$50,000. Christopherson, 24, was the Giants' second first-round draft choice in 1989. He played sparingly last season after recovering from rotator-cuff surgery. "Our reports on him are he has good hands with a strong arm," Piniella says. . . . By trading Erik Hanson, signing Randy Johnson to a multiyear contract and not re-signing Norm Charlton and Russ Swan, the Mariners have only four players eligible for salary arbitration — outfielders Jay Buhner and Eric Anthony and infielders Omar Vizquel and Greg Litton. —JIM STREET

TEXAS RANGERS



A big catch: Mike Scioscia, hoping his throwing arm will return to major league form, has signed a Triple-A contract and will bid to become the Rangers' backup catcher in 1994.

Scioscia, who spent 14 seasons with the Dodgers, missed last season with a torn rotator cuff, but that didn't stop Manager Kevin Kennedy from pushing to get him signed. "There's no question what he means to a ballclub," says Kennedy, a former Dodgers catching instructor. "He gives you good leadership in the clubhouse, and he handles pitchers better than anybody I've ever seen." The Rangers hope Scioscia can impart some of that wisdom to starter Ivan Rodriguez while inspiring his teammates with his hard-nosed style. With the signing of Scioscia, the Rangers are unlikely to re-sign catcher Geno Petralli, who has been with them since 1985. The Rangers want Petralli to take a pay cut and sign a non-guaranteed contract.

Pitching help: Kennedy says one spot in his rotation belongs to rookie righthander Rick Helling, the Rangers' No. 1 draft pick in 1991. "No matter if we make a trade or sign a free agent, he'll be one of our five starting pitchers," Kennedy says. Helling, who has no major league experience, was 12-8 with a 3.60 earned-run average for Tulsa last season and 1-1 with a 1.64 ERA after a late-season promotion to Oklahoma City. He joins rotation holdovers Kevin Brown, Kenny Rogers and Roger Pavlik. —T.R. SULLIVAN

TORONTO BLUE JAYS



Pitching is a priority: The Blue Jays have been keeping a low profile in the offseason, but the front office is searching for lefthanded relievers. "We're not finished making moves yet," Assistant General Manager Gord Ash says. "We want to improve the pitching staff. That remains our No. 1 priority." . . . It will take a couple of weeks, but the Jays expect to sign first baseman John Olerud to a long-term contract. Olerud, who became the first Jay to win a batting title, is eligible for arbitration and won't be a free agent until after the 1995 season. He made \$1,562,500 last season and a long-term pact would likely come close to tripling his annual salary.

Former Jays aplenty: The number of former Jays from '93 reached six when Mark Eichhorn signed a free-agent deal with the Orioles. If the Jays do not sign one of the next wave of free agents, Woody Williams or Scott Brow likely will be asked to fill Eichhorn's relief role. Besides Eichhorn, other former Jays include Rickey Henderson, Jack Morris, Tony Fernandez, Turner Ward and Alfredo Griffin. Toronto has yet to add a player from outside its organization this offseason. . . . Outgoing Executive Vice President Pat Gillick is optimistic the Jays will keep on winning. "We're more gunned up this time than before," he says. "I'm more excited about going for a third than a second (World Series). It might be more difficult but I think we can do it." —STEVE MILTON

ATLANTA BRAVES



Lemke signs: Second baseman Mark Lemke came away from last winter's arbitration hearing disappointed and vowed not to let it happen again. As a result, Lemke doubled his salary by agreeing to a \$1.1 million contract for next season. "I'm happy that I don't have to go through the long process that I did last winter," he says. Lemke reached career highs in homers, RBIs, hits and runs last season while hitting .252. Lemke's signing leaves the Braves with nine unsigned, arbitration-eligible players, including Steve Avery, David Justice, Jeff Blauser and Ron Gant. ... Grady Little will return as Richmond (International) manager next season, but with a different staff. Bill Fischer moves from minor league roving pitching instructor to pitching coach, and Bruce Kimm, who managed Greenville (Southern) last season, has been named third-base coach. Bruce Dalton, Richmond's pitching coach last season, will join Greenville as pitching coach. Former Reds pitching coach Larry Rothschild replaces Fischer.

Rule 5 casualty: The Braves lost highly regarded righthander Carlos Reyes to Oakland in the Rule 5 draft. Reyes was a combined 9-1 at Greenville and Richmond last season. In the Triple-A portion of the draft, the Braves selected lefthander Tom Martin, 23, from the Padres. Martin was 1-4 with a 5.61 ERA in 47 games last season at Rancho Cucamonga (California). —BILL ZACK

CHICAGO CUBS



Outfield picture: New Manager Tom Trebelhorn has hunted at platooning Derrick May and Glenallen Hill in left and Karl Rhodes and Willie Wilson, both projected as being used in the leadoff spot, in center. Trebelhorn was impressed with Hill, not only last season (10 homers in 31 games) but in winter workouts as well. "His power is just not to left field but all over," Trebelhorn says. "What we have to find out is if the frequency of his homers was an aberration or reality." The same holds true for Rhodes, who hit 30 home runs in Triple A and then three in 15 games for the Cubs. He hit only 16 in his previous minor league seasons.

Infield talk: Injured infielders Ryne Sandberg and Shawon Dunston continue to improve. Sandberg, who missed the first month with a broken right hand and the last month with a dislocated finger on his right hand, has been an active participant in winter minicamps in Mesa, Ariz. Dunston, who is expected at the third camp in mid-January, has hired his own trainer and is sticking to workout and rehabilitation programs for his back. ... After the release of reserve catcher Steve Lake, the Cubs signed catchers Mark Parent, Mike Malsudian and George Pedre to minor league contracts. Parent has the most major league experience, although he played in only 22 games with Baltimore last season. At Triple-A Rochester, Parent hit .247 with 14 homers and 56 RBIs. —DAVE VAN DYCK

CINCINNATI REDS



Welcome back: The interest in free-agent third baseman Chris Sabo has not been overwhelming, leading to speculation he could return to Cincinnati after the 1994 season begins. "We've told Chris that if the market isn't what he thinks it is, we'd like him to keep an open mind about signing with us on May 1," General Manager Jim Bowden says. "We've instructed our club personnel to not give away his uniform number." Because the Reds did not offer arbitration, they are not allowed to negotiate with Sabo before May 1. Teams have balked at Sabo's money demands, reportedly in the three-year, \$12-million range. ... The Reds took former area high school star Adam Hyzdu from the Giants in the Rule 5 draft. Bowden says the club will give Hyzdu every chance to stick as a sixth outfielder and reserve first baseman so they won't have to put him on waivers or offer him back to the Giants.

Pitching help: The Reds bolstered their bullpen with the acquisition of lefthander Chuck McElroy from the Cubs for righthanded starter Larry Luebbers. McElroy was 2-2 with a 4.56 earned-run average last season, but the Reds are hoping for a return to 1991 form — 6-2 with a 1.95 ERA. ... Bowden says any future deals will not affect the team's nucleus. "From here on out, we're not going to make any major moves," he says. "We're not going to be signing anybody to multi-year deals." —BILL PETERSON

COLORADO ROCKIES



A weighty topic: Charlie Hayes has adopted an offseason routine designed to prepare him for the cool climate he found in Colorado. "In Cincinnati, St. Louis or cities like that, you might not have to do some extra work because it's so humid," Hayes says. "But in Denver, you have to push yourself." Hayes played most of 1993 at 225 pounds and is intent on reporting to spring training at 215. "I felt great, but some people were concerned (about the weight)," Hayes says. "I want to get (the weight) down and just play baseball." Hayes, who is lifting weights just to strengthen his legs because of the hamstring problems he had, hit .305 with an N.L.-leading 45 doubles. He also had 25 home runs and 98 RBIs, tied with Andres Galarraga for the most ever by a player on a first-year team.

Additions: General Manager Bob Gebhard set a goal of acquiring as many players as possible from the 15-man protected lists that teams submitted for the expansion draft. A year later, he has picked up five of them — pitchers Greg Harris (San Diego), Kent Bottenfield (Montreal) and Mike Munoz (Detroit), infielder Howard Johnson (Mets) and outfielder Darrell Sherman (San Diego). ... The Rockies selected righthanded pitcher Marc Pisciotta from Pittsburgh in the major league draft. Pisciotta, 23, was a combined 5-2 with 24 saves and a 2.76 ERA at Class-A Augusta and Salem. He struck out 62 and walked 30 in 62 innings. —TAMMY BINGOLLEY



May Day? The Reds say they would re-sign Sabo on May 1 if he's still available.

FLORIDA MARLINS



Weiss is out: The Marlins, unwilling to match free agent Walt Weiss' asking price, are about to close a deal with Weiss' former team, the A's, in which they will acquire shortstop prospect Kurt Abbott from the A's for Class-A outfielder Kerwin Moore. Weiss' refusal to accept salary arbitration by Sunday's deadline almost certainly signals the end of his term with the Marlins, even though the free-agent shortstop is coming off the best year of his career. "At this point I can't see anything happening," Weiss says. The Marlins apparently believe they have a replacement in Abbott, 24, who spent most of last season playing for the A's Triple-A farm team in Tacoma. Abbott batted .319 with 12 home runs in 133 games for Tacoma. He made his big league debut with the A's in a September call-up and hit .246 in 20 games. Marlins General Manager Dave Dombrowski refused to comment on the pending deal, but club officials believe Abbott is capable of being an everyday shortstop next season.

Klink on board: Marlins reliever Joe Klink, who did not pitch in 1992 because of an elbow injury, capped a successful comeback season by signing his first multiyear contract. The lefthander, who will be 32 on February 3, signed for a base salary of \$310,000 in 1994, with an additional \$60,000 if he appears in 55 games. If Klink appears in 45 games, his contract is renewed for 1995, with a raise to \$375,000. —GORDON EDES

HOUSTON ASTROS



Reshaping process: Bob Watson has established himself as a man of action in his first two months as G.M. of the Astros, but Watson is the first to admit he will have to make a few more moves before spring training. "We're still looking for a righthanded-hitting outfielder," Watson says. "And now we've got an opening for one in right field." Watson traded right fielder Eric Anthony to Seattle for reserve outfielder Mike Felder and minor

league pitcher Mike Hampton. It was Watson's third trade since being named the Astros' general manager October 4. Watson says Felder, expected to be the fourth outfielder, will give the Astros an element of speed that was missing last season. The key player in the trade is Hampton, who faltered in a brief test with Seattle in '93 (1-3, 9.53 ERA) but is regarded as one of the top young lefthanded pitching prospects. Hampton will be given a chance to win a spot in the rotation.

Help wanted: In order to get a righthanded-hitting outfielder with power, the Astros may have to give up a veteran pitcher. Watson has talked with Cleveland about right fielder Manny Ramirez, but the Indians want Pete Harnusch. ... Second baseman James Mouton and shortstop Orlando Miller had excellent seasons in the Arizona Fall League, but it remains uncertain where they fit in for '94. Though both spent '93 at Triple-A Tucson, they could start '94 there unless the Astros make big changes. —NEIL HOHLFELD

LOS ANGELES DODGERS



DeShields still dazed: DeShields, the Dodgers' new second baseman, says it probably will be spring training before he gets over the shock of the November 18 trade in which he was obtained from Montreal for pitcher Pedro Martinez. "I'm probably not going to get over it until I put on my Dodger uniform," DeShields says. But, DeShields adds, "The more I think about it, the more I know I'm in a better situation. I'm going to miss the guys in Montreal; we all came up together. But as far as being a professional athlete, and being seen, there's no doubt in my mind playing in Los Angeles is a better situation."

Treading softly, for now: The Dodgers, who let backup infielders Lenny Harris and Mike Sharperson leave after last season, moved to replace them by signing utilityman Jeff Treadway to a minor league contract for a guaranteed \$500,000. Treadway, who turns 31 January 22, batted .303 in 97 games with Cleveland. If he makes the big league club, the Dodgers will get an option for 1995 at \$500,000 with a \$50,000 buyout. ... The Dodgers selected lefthanded pitcher John Barfield in the Rule 5 draft. Barfield, 29, had a combined 8-3 record last season with Triple-A Nashville and Double-A Birmingham, the two top farm clubs of the White Sox. Barfield has a 40-41 seven-year minor league record. He pitched all or parts of three seasons (1989 to '91) with Texas. He was assigned to Albuquerque. —GORDON VERRELL

MONTREAL EXPOS



Insurance policy: The Expos picked up Randy Milligan from the Indians for a player to be named as insurance. "We think he can provide a bit of a bridge for us in the event that Cliff Floyd needs some seasoning," Expos General Manager Dan Duquette says. Floyd finished the Arizona Fall League strongly, winning playoff MVP honors, but he still needs

some refining defensively. If nothing else, a quality righthanded hitter such as Milligan sets up a nice platoon situation with Floyd, a lefthanded hitter. And, yes, he'll provide a little leadership for a team that might have been lacking in that department with the trade of Delino DeShields.

Barnes on the block: Lefthander Brian Barnes was designated for assignment and will be traded, Duquette says. The Expos say they have enough lefthanded depth and have been talking to the Indians and Mariners about Barnes. . . . Righthander Mel Rojas continues to be a much-sought commodity. The Expos and Orioles talked about a David Segui-for-Rojas deal before the Milligan trade. . . . As expected, second baseman Randy Ready signed a contract with Triple-A Ottawa that includes an invitation to spring training. The minor league contract is strictly a paper move: The Expos didn't have any room on their 40-man roster. . . . Catcher Tim Laker, off to a blazing start in winter ball, was sent home from Puerto Rico after bruising his wrist.

—JEFF BLAIR

NEW YORK METS



Finally, a real third baseman? The Mets are looking into third baseman Chris Sabo, whom the Reds paid \$3.1 million last season. The club met with Sabo's agent, Jim Bron-

ner, on December 14, and Sabo was examined last Thursday by the Mets' physician, who found no major physical problems. Sabo has been bothered by lower-back problems the past two seasons. The Mets have made no offer but intend to contact Bronner again. In '93, Sabo hit .259 with 21 homers, 82 RBIs and 86 runs in 148 games and 552 at-bats. If he were to sign with the Mets, Bobby Bonilla would move to first base or left field. Last season, Bonilla started 50 games at third, where he made 11 errors — as many as Sabo.

There are alternatives: Manager Dalias Green indicated that veteran Joe Orsulak and Alan Zinter, a switch-hitting 25-year-old first baseman who had a solid Double-A season, would be considered candidates for first base if the club obtained no other first baseman and Bonilla played third or left. . . . The Mets had to sweat out the minor league draft before they could complete the December 10 trade that already had imported Frank Seminara and Tracy Sanders. Also acquired was 23-year-old minor league shortstop Pablo Martinez, but only after he hadn't been drafted off the Padres' Triple-A roster. The Padres also had to wait until the draft was over to gain the right to Mets pitcher Marc Kroon.

—MARTY NOBLE

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES



Thanks but no thanks: He's the first Phillie since Steve Carlton to win 12 or more games three years in a row; among N.L. lefthanders, only Tom Glavine and Steve Avery have

won more games than he has over the last three seasons; and he was the starting pitcher for last season's N.L. All-Star team. So

why are the Phillies shopping Terry Mulholland? "I wouldn't say we're shopping Terry," General Manager Lee Thomas says. "But in this day and age, you have to pay attention when other teams express an interest. Terry can become a free agent after the (1994) season, so there are a number of things to be considered." The Yankees and the Orioles have expressed interest in Mulholland.

Four more years: The Phillies could use the money they save if they trade Mulholland, 12-9 last season, to help afford Lenny Dykstra's next contract. It's likely Dykstra, whose contract expires after the '94 season, will double his \$2.5-million salary. The Phillies are believed to be negotiating a four-year contract that will include a multimillion-dollar signing bonus and a club option for 1999. Mulholland, 30, lost his niche as staff ace to Curt Schilling, who presents another interesting salary situation. Schilling has three more years in which to bargain against the prospect of salary arbitration, reason enough for the Phillies to consider offering a long-term deal. He made \$1 million last season while going 16-7.

—BILL BROWN



Shop talk: Mulholland has drawn some trade interest, and the Phillies are listening.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES



Hunting for a job: The logical spot for Brian Hunter is in a left-field platoon with Al Martin. But Manager Jim Leyland says it's too early to commit to anything definite. Hunter could

play right field if the Pirates wind up trading Orlando Merced for pitching. Most of Hunter's experience is at first base, where Kevin Young had a disappointing rookie season. There are definitely options to consider. "I don't know what the big deal is," General Manager Cam Bonifay says. "Good players find a way to get themselves into the lineup." . . . The up-and-down career of outfielder Scott Bleett is on an upswing again. Bleett was so impressive in the Arizona Fall League that Bonifay says he could make the club.

King stays at third: The Pirates scrapped

plans to move Jeff King to first base because Leyland thinks so much of King as a third baseman. . . . The Pirates signed a handful of minor league free agents. Frank Bolick, formerly of the Expos, and Tracy Woodson, who spent last year with the Cardinals, could have an outside shot at bench jobs. Woodson hit .292 as a pinch-hitter in '93. . . . It remains to be seen how the Pirates do on the field, but they're going to start 1994 with a gain of about \$750,000 through an impending reduction in Pittsburgh's 10 percent amusement tax. The levy will be cut to 5 percent as part of an overhaul that will also funnel money to the upkeep of Three Rivers Stadium.

—JOHN MENDO

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS



Guettermann's gone:

The Cardinals settled on the lefthanded side of their bullpen by signing Paul Kilgus to a one-year contract for \$225,000 and not bringing back veteran Lee

Guettermann. Kilgus, 31, was 1-0 with an 0.63 ERA in spot duty. Guettermann, 35, was 3-3 with a 2.93 ERA in 40 games. General Manager Dal Maxvill, talking about not retaining Guettermann, says, "With Kilgus signed and (Rob) Murphy and other guys there capable of helping, you can only have so many lefthanders in the bullpen. It was tough to picture (Guettermann) being a part of it." Lefthander Rheal Cormier might also be in the bullpen if he fails to win a job in the rotation.

New blood: Marty Maier, who replaces highly successful Fred McAlister as director of scouting, says his regime will be a lot like the old one. "Fred's still going to see free agents in the spring and work with Dal," Maier says. "With Freddie still here, there will be continuity." McAlister says he regrets bypassing Frank Thomas in the 1989 draft for Paul Coleman, who struggled as an outfielder and has been converted to pitcher. "Looking back, you wish you had taken (Thomas)," McAlister says. "That was probably my biggest mistake." But with Donovan Osborne and Allen Watson in the majors, McAlister has made nine big-leaguers of 11 No. 1 selections. "I've only missed two years," he says. "Not too many people can say that in this business."

—RICK HUMMEL

SAN DIEGO PADRES



Bucks for Bip: Entering the offseason, the Padres had no money for free agents. But since free agent Bip Roberts expressed a deep interest in the Padres, money is suddenly

available. "This is not something we budgeted for or expected," General Manager Randy Smith says. "But we have an opportunity to improve our team." That's a swift change in philosophy for a team that spent 1993 unloading salaries. The Padres are willing to spend \$1.5 million to \$2 million on Roberts, who made \$3.9 million in '93. "I think we have a pretty good chance to do something," Smith says. But negotiations stalled when agent Scott Boras, evidently distracted by interest from the White Sox, can-

celed a weekend meeting with Smith.

Elster added: Searching for a veteran back-up infielder, the Padres signed shortstop Kevin Elster to a Triple-A contract and invited him to spring training. Elster, 29, sat out all of the 1993 season and played just six games in 1992 because of major shoulder surgery. . . . The Padres selected first baseman Tim Hyers, 22, from the Blue Jays during last week's Rule 5 draft. Hyers, who hit .306 at Double-A Knoxville, will be carried on the major-league roster throughout the 1994 season, Smith says. . . . Hyers' acquisition has increased the Padres' efforts to deal first-base prospect Guillermo Velasquez. The Padres have held talks with the Expos involving Velasquez.

—CHRIS DE LUCA



Third is a charm: King still rules over the hot corner in Pittsburgh.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS



Giants sign reliever:

The Giants didn't see much of righthanded reliever Tony Menendez last season, but evidently they saw enough to convince them he could pitch. Menendez,

28, most recently with the Pirates, was signed by the Giants as a free agent. Menendez was 2-0 with a 3.00 ERA in 14 appearances with the Pirates last season, and he retired four Giants on September 9, the start of an eight-game losing streak that knocked the Giants out of first place. "We feel Tony is just beginning to realize his potential," Giants General Manager Bob Quinn says. Menendez was the closer for Triple-A Buffalo before being called up to the Pirates late last season. With Buffalo, Menendez saved 24 games.

Cold drafts: The Giants' poor drafting made the news last week when outfielder Adam Hyzdu and catcher Eric Christopherson — both first-round choices in 1990 — were chosen in the Rule 5 draft. Hyzdu was the team's first choice, at a time when many in the organization were lobbying for Stanford pitcher Mike Mussina. Hyzdu was chosen by the Reds. He hit .291 with 13 homers in 44 games at Class-A San Jose, then struggled (.202 in 86 games) when promoted to Double-A Shreveport. Christopherson, a good defensive catcher whose hitting never advanced, was chosen by the Mariners. He played in 15 games for Shreveport in 1993 after recovering from a rotator-cuff tear in his throwing shoulder.

—TIM KEOWN

The best at being CLOSE

As old friends, the Rockets know each other and how to win down the stretch — of a game and a season

By JODY GOLDSTEIN

The Houston Rockets have proved they are the best team in the NBA. When you look at how they've won, you see why they will continue to win, all the way through the NBA Finals.

"They probably are the best team in the league in close games," says Seattle Coach George Karl, who saw for himself when the Rockets beat the SuperSonics on December 11. The teams are ranked by many, including THE SPORTING NEWS, as the two best in the NBA. They play again Tuesday, this time in Seattle.

The Rockets are 6-0 in games decided by four points or fewer. They've trailed or been tied five times in the final minutes, but have come back to win four. Only the Hawks couldn't be caught, 133-111.

The Rockets trailed the Cavs by seven with 2:43 remaining, but the Rockets battled back for a one-point victory. The Chippers tied the Rockets with 22.5 seconds remaining, but Hakeem Olajuwon hit a jumper.

The Rockets went to overtime against the Jazz and Magic. They trailed the Jazz by two with five seconds to play. They trailed the Magic by three with 3.6 seconds to go, but Vernon Maxwell hit a 30-footer at the buzzer. Against the 76ers, the Rockets were 12 down at the start of the fourth quarter but won by four.

The key to pulling out those games is the same key to the Rockets' success — defense.

"You have to make the stops," Rockets Coach Rudy Tomjanovich says. "Defense is a big, big factor. Like against Miami, if they go down and score just one more time, it's over. We've played great defense."

The Rockets have outscored their opponents in the final two minutes in 14 of 22 games. In most of the other games, they already had solid leads.

"Championship teams win tough ballgames," Scott Brooks says. "If we want to be a championship team, we have to win those."

Brooks is one of the Rockets' fourth-quarter weapons. Though Kenny Smith is the starting point guard, Brooks has played the final period in every game but one.

"He provides stability, getting them to play the run and pressuring up on defense," Tomjanovich says. "He's a pest."

Olajuwon is the Rockets' best player. Many say he should have been voted the MVP award last season instead of being runnerup to Charles Barkley. Many say Olajuwon will win it this season. But in the final two minutes, nine players have led the Rockets in scoring.

"This is not a one-dimensional team," Tomjanovich says. "There is a wonderful feeling as a coach that so many guys can contribute. When the team is playing together, there's no feeling like it."

The Rockets point out that their success this season is not something new. Since January 10, the Rockets are 62-12, the best mark in the NBA. The Rockets took the Sonics to seven games in the



All for one and . . . Olajuwon (right) says the Rockets win because they are playing "just plain team basketball."

Western Conference semifinals last season.

"We're getting respect around the league and the only way you do that is by winning," Otis Thorpe says.

"As a team, we've started to have an identity," says Tomjanovich, in his second full season as the Rockets' head coach. "We understand what type of basketball we have to play to be successful. We've learned the subtleties of offense and defense and learned who we are."

Who they are is one of the most dominating defenses in the league. The Rockets have surrendered an average of 92.6 points per game. They've allowed only two teams to reach 100 this season. They held the Sonics, one of the NBA's best offenses, to 75 points when they were averaging 108.

"We understand now that we're just average if we get in a run-and-gun game," Tomjanovich says. "Our defense is partly individual with the fiery competitive people we have. But it's mainly a system with a lot of teamwork. When you know your teammate is there, it helps a lot with confidence and morale."

This isn't the same Rockets squad that opened the 1992-93 season. The Rockets lost seven consecutive games from December 28 through January 8, and their record was 14-16 on January 10. Then came eight- and 15-game win streaks.

"Our defense learned who we are," Tomjanovich says. "We were 14-16 last year and we had some bad moments, especially that seven-game streak. The biggest thing is that we had to recommit. We had some big defensive games, but we had to go out and play that kind of defense every night."

As the other teams in the West made major changes in the offseason, the Rockets did what in the NBA amounts to little. Sleepy Floyd was allowed to leave. Swingman Mario Elie was acquired from the Trail Blazers — who were giving him up to open a salary slot to sign Chris Dudley — for a 1995 second-round draft choice, and guard Sam Cassell was drafted in the first round, with the 24th pick.

"Most NBA teams make the mistake of having a high turnover ratio," Brooks says. "A lot of them have five to six new faces each year, key faces. We made a commitment with the guys we had, then went out and got a couple of key additions."

Elie has been one of the biggest surprises as sixth man. He has scored 8.6 points while averaging 22 minutes per game. He comes off the bench to rest Robert Horry or Maxwell.

"He's one of those guys that I coveted when I was watching Portland last year," Tomjanovich says. "The guy is a warrior. He takes a challenge. He's a team player."

Elie scored 17 points at Utah on November 24. He led the Rockets into overtime, scoring eight points in the fourth quarter, including two free throws with 2.1 seconds to go to tie the score. He scored 16 points at Golden State in only 18 minutes, 13 points against the Clippers and 11 at New Jersey.

"He brings a toughness," Brooks says. "He's a strong, competitive package. He's not a one-dimensional player at all. He's an excellent attitude to have in the locker room."

Cassell was crucial early in the season, starting four games at point guard in place of Kenny Smith, who was injured. Cassell's ability to handle Smith's half of the point-guard position allowed Tomjanovich to leave the rest of his lineup in its customary roles. Cassell averaged 11.3 points, 4.3 rebounds, 2.5 assists and 2 steals in those starts. He shot .438 from 3-point range while going up against B.J. Armstrong, John Stockton, Bobby Hurley and Mark Jackson.

Tomjanovich let Cassell play the final minutes against the Heat, even though Brooks has been the Rockets' fourth-quarter point guard most of the season.

"We say it after every game — it's going to be a different guy each night," Tomjanovich says. "I've been very lucky on the decisions. It could have backfired."

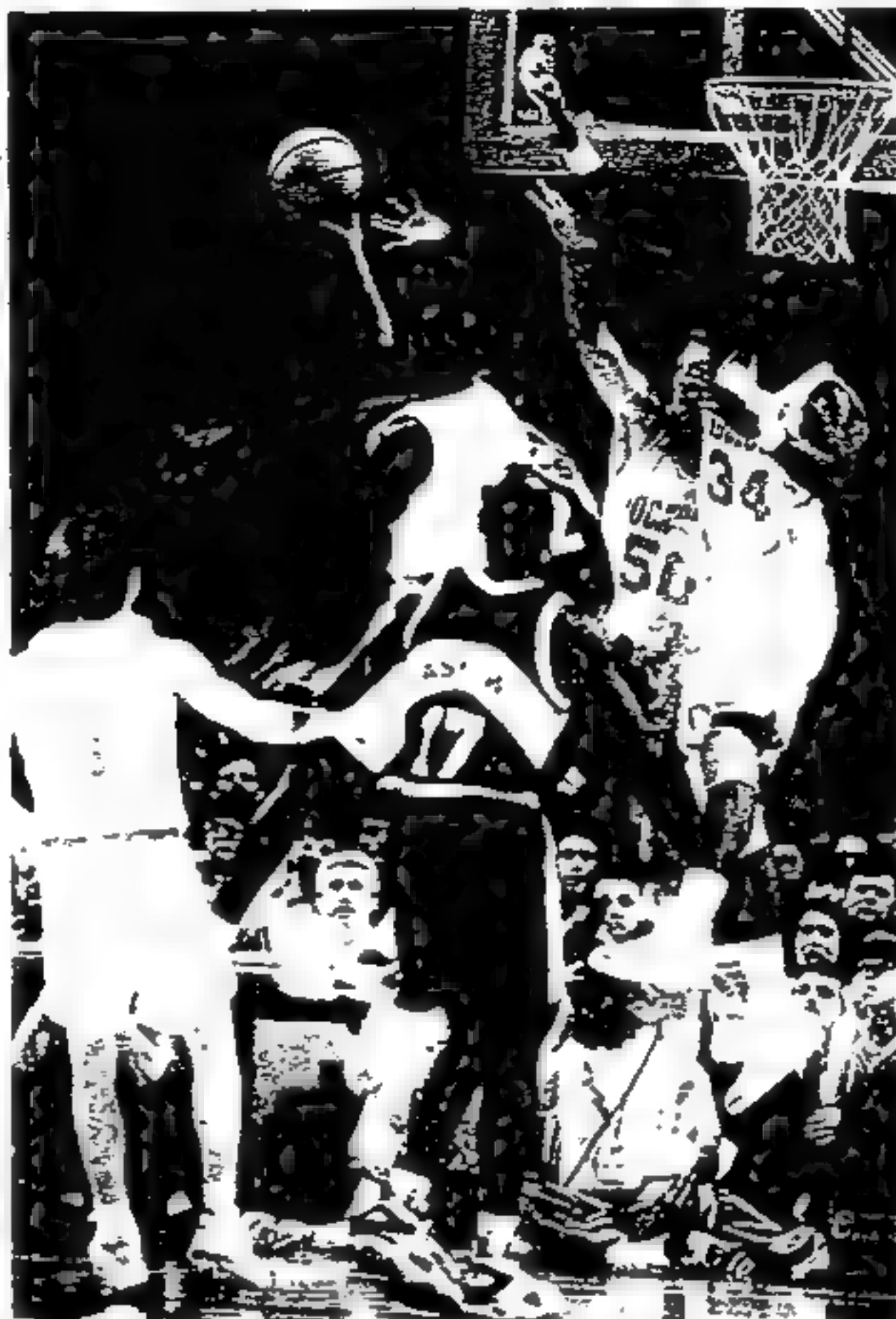
Olujuwon remains the mamstay of this club. He was selected NBA Player of the Month for October and November. He is averaging 24.9 points, 12.4 rebounds per game. Olujuwon, a 7-foot center, has at least one blocked shot per game dating back to January 5.

"As far as I was concerned, he was the MVP last year," Bucks Coach Mike Dunleavy says. "I voted for him, but the media has its own darlings. He was great last year, but he's even better this season. The difference is, he's playing a total team game and doing whatever it takes to make the Rockets win."

The big difference is confidence in his teammates. Olujuwon has been giving up the ball more.

"The great teams have the go-to guy who can make a difference at the end of games," Bucks veteran Danny Schayes says. "He's not just like Barkley, who can score at the end of games. He's also the guy who can make the big block or get the big defensive rebound. This year, he seems to be passing the ball better out of the low post. When you add that to his inside game, it makes it tough."

The other difference this season is simply time to learn each



Rematch: The Rockets — led by (from right) Olujuwon, Bullard, Herrera and Brooks — beat the Sonics. They play again Tuesday

other's games. Horry and Brooks are in their second seasons with the Rockets, Carl Herrera his third, and Maxwell, Smith and Matt Bullard their fourth, Thorpe his sixth, Olujuwon his 10th.

"It's just been a matter of getting familiar with one another's game," Olujuwon says. "It makes you play more as a team. We're playing team defense, offense and just plain team basketball. We're winning games because everybody is playing their role. The chemistry could not be better and everyone is striving to one goal."

The players say they sincerely like one another. Though they don't spend time together off the court, they interact on airplanes, go out for meals and spend time together on the road.

"Basketball players are a little different than baseball players or hockey players or even college players," Tomjanovich says. "They're a lot more individual, a lot more loners. So it's amazed me the way they get together, interact on planes. On the road, groups of guys are going out. One of the biggest keys to this team is that they pull for each other because they get along so well."

They've also been unselfish. Smith accepted the fact that Brooks is the Rockets' fourth-quarter point guard this season. Smith had the best field-goal percentage among NBA guards last year but has never in his career ranked in the top 10 in assists. "I worry about the things I can control," Smith says. "I can control my shooting, rebounds, defense. I can't control who's in and who isn't. That's a coach's decision. I just worry about how I play when I'm in."

Brooks accepted the fact that rookie Cassell would get the start instead of him when Smith became injured. Olujuwon gave up the ball when the Hornets double-teamed him all night, allowing Thorpe to enjoy a 40-point night. Maxwell has improved his shot selection, learning to pass enough to become the Rockets' leader in assists, averaging one more per game than he has through his career.

"If it's there for me, I will take the shot, but I don't mind dishing off," Maxwell says. "I'm trying to drive into the middle to create something. It's something I've added to my game. It's helped me out a lot."

The Rockets haven't advanced beyond the second round of the playoffs since playing the Celtics in the NBA Finals in 1986. They've missed the playoffs only once since 1984.

"I definitely think they are one of the teams that can win it," Nets Coach Chuck Daly says. "They have an MVP candidate in the middle. They have very agile, quick forwards and they are a great 3-point shooting team. They are very well coached — a tough team to play against."

Jody Goldstein covers the Rockets and Oilers for the Houston Chronicle.

Rocket man

Rudy Tomjanovich learned how to be a winning NBA coach despite spending his entire career with the Rockets.

He was a player from 1970 through '81. In those 11 seasons, the team had a winning record just twice. The Rockets reached the NBA Finals only once, losing to the Celtics in six games.

He spent two seasons as a scout. The team went 60-104.

He was an assistant coach for eight full seasons. The team had a losing record only once, but outside of reaching the NBA Finals in 1986, won only one other playoff series.

He became coach on February 18, 1992, when the Rockets fired Don Chaney. That team started 11-4. Last season, in his first full season as head coach, he was 55-27. He is the only coach to take a team from the lottery to the playoffs in his first full season.

This season, the Rockets tied the record set in 1948-49 by the Washington Capitols for best start (15-0). The Rockets have the second-best start to a season of 20-1, behind only the 23-1 of the Knicks in 1969-70.

"Streaks and what people say about you mean nothing," Tomjanovich says. "What matters is putting the team No. 1 and your personal needs and goals secondary. My philosophy has been the same as a player and as a coach."

Tomjanovich is third among Rockets in scoring with 13,383 points (17.4 per game), trailing only Calvin Murphy and Hakeem Olujuwon. But his focus is on defense.

"Our record won't get us anything," Tomjanovich says. "It won't get us rebounds, it won't dive on the floor to get a loose ball."

"We've got to do it by playing as hard as we can. That's why I'm so proud of these guys. We're in the record books and we've got a lot of guys who don't have big names."

"We don't have a slew of lottery picks. We do have the teamwork and the defense and the movement of the ball."

Tomjanovich played with Hall of Famers Calvin Murphy and Elvin Hayes and future Hall of Famer Moses Malone.

"My philosophy has always been to listen every day so I can continue to get better," Tomjanovich says. "Even as a player, right up to the end of my career, they brought in Moses, some of those guys, and I learned a lot from them."

—JODY GOLDSTEIN

New roles

The Rockets are off to a better start this season than last, not by changing the lineup, but through subtle changes by the players already in the rotation. Those changes:

Hakeem Olujuwon: Passing more when he's double-teamed.

Otis Thorpe: Healthier; a season ago, he had a bruised kidney.

Vernon Maxwell: Better shot selection.

Robert Horry: In his second season, he is more comfortable in NBA.

Kenny Smith: Sits out the final period in favor of a better defender.

Scotty Brooks: Plays point guard down the stretch.

Matt Bullard: Improved his defense.

Carl Herrera: He rested this summer. The summer before, he played on the Venezuelan team that qualified for the Olympics for the first time.

—JODY GOLDSTEIN

NBA REPORT

Hurley's attributes save his life . . . and his career



Tim
POUTAK

Bobby Hurley will play basketball again. Hurley nearly died last week when the truck he was driving was struck by another vehicle only an hour after a Kings game. He was knocked out of his truck and into a drainage ditch, leaving him with collapsed lungs, a torn windpipe, broken ribs, a compression fracture of his back, and knee and wrist injuries.

But the Kings selected him in the 1993 NBA draft because of the fight inside him, because good fortune always seemed to follow him, and it has been no different since the crash.

Doctors say he is lucky to be alive, that only some fortunate circumstances in the minutes after the crash prevented him from dying at the scene.

Teammate Mike Peplowski, who left the arena a few minutes after Hurley, and an off-duty policeman came upon the accident. Both had medical training, and both knew what to do.

There also just happened to be a phone in one of the cars, and the call for assistance was quick. The accident just happened to occur close to one of the top trauma centers in the world. A doctor there just happened to

be a leading expert at the surgery required immediately to save Hurley's life. And Hurley's recuperative powers have impressed the medical staff at the University Medical Center in Sacramento.

They are saying now that his injuries — however life-threatening they were — can heal completely. If all continues to go well, Hurley will have surgery in two months to repair ligament damage in his knee, and could play again in 10 months, says Richard Marder, the team doctor.

For the Kings, bad luck has been their only luck. It has varied from tragic to almost comical.

This is the team that gave Hall of Famer Bill Russell a seven-year contract in 1987 to be coach, general manager and eventually team president, only to discover he had no real interest in any of those jobs.

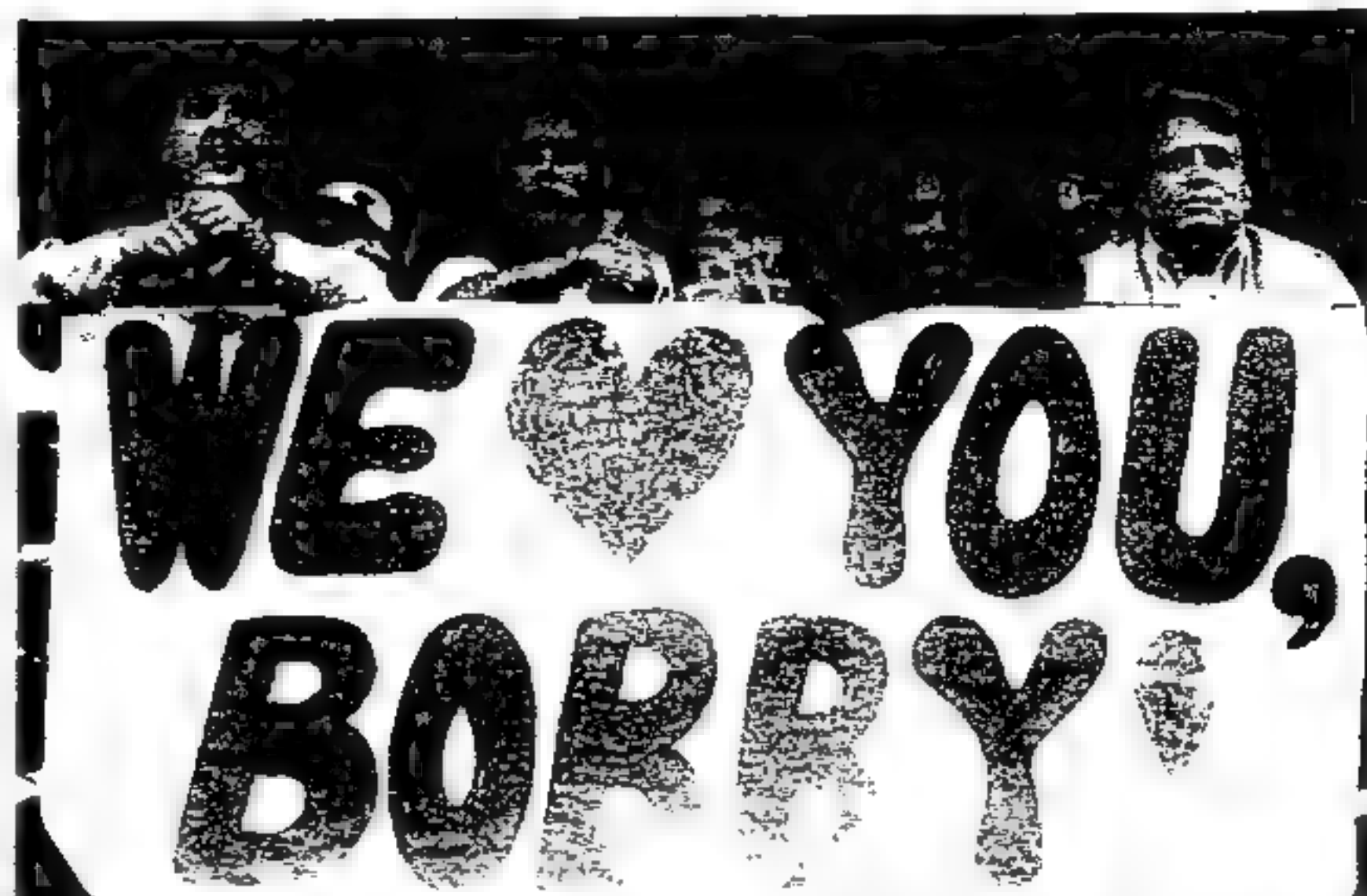
This is the team that drafted San Jose State's Ricky Berry in 1988 in the first round, only to see him die shortly afterward of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

This is the team that made Louisville's Pervis Ellison the No. 1 pick of the 1989 draft, only to discover his feet were bad and he had no burning desire to play. They traded for Ralph Sampson in 1989, only to find out his knees were so bad that his playing days were over.

This is the team that drafted Billy Owens in 1991, but had to trade him because Owens refused to play in Sacramento. The Kings traded for Dwayne Schatzert in 1991, only to see him develop a herniated disk in his back five months later. They traded Otis Thorpe in 1988 and Danny Ainge in 1990. They drafted Travis Mays in 1990.

The history in Sacramento is not a pretty one.

But the return of Hurley could be a glorious one.



A time of sadness: Fans in Sacramento were supportive, and the Kings' Peplowski, Coach Garry St. Jean and Spud Webb (from left below) grim in the days after Hurley's accident. Hurley was injured within sight of the Arco Arena.



Knicks face struggle

Does anyone else believe now that the Knicks won't walk through the Eastern Conference and into the NBA Finals?

The Hawks and the Knicks, leaders in the Central and the Atlantic divisions, will meet Thursday night in Madison Square Garden in a game that will show which is the best team in the East.

The Knicks already were crushed at home by the Rockets. And now they are without Doc Rivers, who is out for the season with a knee injury, and face at least another month without Charles Smith.

The Knicks are hoping to trade Smith and draft choices to the Mavericks for

Derek Harper, which would shore up a backcourt that right now has to start Greg Anthony and John Starks.

Trades key to Hawks

Coach Lenny Wilkens has been credited with sparking the Hawks' surprising start, but General Manager Pete Babcock deserves some of the credit for building that young and talented backcourt.

Point guard Mookie Blaylock and shooting guard Stacey Augmon, who are key in the Hawks' rise atop the Central Division, were obtained in trades.

Blaylock, second in the league in steals, was obtained from New Jersey before last season for Rumeal Robinson, who already has been traded to



Trade secrets: Deals enabled the Hawks to land starting guards Augmon (left) and Blaylock.

the Hornets.

Augmon was obtained with the ninth pick of the 1991 draft, which was acquired from the Clippers for Rivers. Augmon looks like a future All-Star.



Reed, Daly at odds

Nets ownership wants to know why it is paying center Benoit Benjamin so much (\$3.57 million) and getting so little (20 minutes, 7.2 points, 5.6 rebounds per game) in return.

And that question has caused a serious rift between general manager Willis Reed, who acquired Benjamin last summer, and Coach Chuck Daly, who doesn't like using Benjamin.

Is anyone surprised? Benjamin, who is the Nets' highest-paid player, has spent a career as an underachiever, and the Lakers were more than happy to dump him. The only surprise was that the Nets wanted him.

"I'm not willing to accept that he can't play," says



Rift-maker: Benjamin averages only 20 minutes.

Reed, who coached Benjamin at Creighton University. "Players need minutes to get into a groove."

"It's up to him to make the most of his minutes," Daly responds.

Tim Poutak covers the NBA for the Orlando Sentinel.

NBA

INSIDE



Knowing the score: Frazier (right) praises Ewing's offense.

Patrick proves a point

When Patrick Ewing came out of Georgetown in 1985, scouts said he did not have the offense to star in the NBA. "They still do," he says. "They still say I can't do a lot of things."

The only question now is whether he can take the New York Knicks to the NBA Finals — a far less certain prospect now that teammate Doc Rivers is out with a knee injury — and how he would fare under that glare. Everything else is answered: Ewing has been selected for every All-Star Game since leaving the Hoyas, and last week he solidified his place in NBA history by becoming the Knicks' all-time scoring leader.

With a 12-foot baseline jumper last Thursday, the 31-year-old center surpassed Walt Frazier. It took Clyde 759 games from 1967-77 to score his 14,617 points. Ewing got there in his 618th game, and in his ninth season. "This means a lot to me," Ewing says.

Ewing's game keeps improving. Says Knicks Coach Pat Riley: "He has developed an array of moves inside: leaners and runners and turnaround jumpers. He can shoot the ball from the perimeter. If we keep moving him off the ball coming to the post instead of a stationary post-up, he'll be able to get deeper spots. He has a total arsenal."

"The thing Patrick has to continue to improve upon, as most centers do, is the recognition and reading of the double team and the willingness to throw the ball out of the post."

Frazier, an analyst on Knicks broadcasts, says, "I'm a little surprised he has developed into this good an offensive player. Patrick came into the league best known for his defensive exploits, but he has really developed his perimeter shot."

"He and Brad Daugherty have the best repertoires of any big men. Brad has a hook Ewing doesn't have. But Ewing has the ability to penetrate in the paint and really knows how to draw fouls."

Ewing says individual records mean little to him, and he plays that way. One example stood out from the game in which he passed Frazier: Early on, Ewing was open along the baseline but passed to Charles Oakley under the basket. "I just played my game. I wasn't going to let anything affect me," Ewing says.

That is one reason why his teammates wanted him to get the record. Rivers and John Starks vowed to feed him the assist. Anthony Mason said he would pass up a dunk for Ewing.

Oakley assisted on the basket. He had to dive to the floor to get a loose ball. He got it to Ewing, who hit the big jumper. "I was glad to be the guy on the other end," Oakley says. "He deserves it... because of the hard work he was willing to go through."

Ewing's hardest work is ahead of him. Without Rivers to get him the ball, there will be even more pressure on Ewing. If the Knicks pick up another point guard, such as Dallas' Derek Harper, there will have to be some quick chemistry. And if Ewing does reach the Finals for the first time, skeptics will be waiting to see just how far he has come.

Bad to the bone

If this were Derek Harper's perfect world, he would have gone to New York this past Monday in a trade rather than as an opponent. Harper, a point guard, seems a logical replacement somehow for Doc Rivers (torn anterior cruciate ligament) for four reasons: (a) Pat Riley always raved about him while coaching the Lakers; (b) Harper would be driven by a chance to get to his first NBA Finals; (c) Rolando Blackman played nine years with Harper and now is a Knicks guard; and (d) Harper is on one of the worst teams ever to play a game of round-ball.

Just how bad are the Mavs? The 1972-73 Philadelphia 76ers set the record for the longest NBA losing streak with 20, and the Mavericks were at 18 and counting entering this week. If there was to be a record, it would come Thursday at Minnesota. And to set this kind of record there, against the Timberwolves, indeed would distinguish them as really bad.

"What is there to be happy about?" Harper asked after losing to the Rockets, who were 21-1. "We've lost 21 out of 22 games. We're going the opposite direction of the Rockets."



A Knick in time? Harper has always impressed Riley

High setting

Thumbs up to the Detroit Pistons for deciding to hang the No. 15 jersey of Vinme Johnson. Although he made only 164 starts in his 10-year career with Detroit, the Microwave made up for it by shooting and scoring as much as humanly possible off the bench.

Johnson was a cold-blooded shooter and a big part of the team's back-to-back reign from 1989-91, and his most memorable shot closed out Portland in the 1990 Finals. "This means respect big-time, respect

that I sometimes felt I didn't get," he says.

You can go home

Byron Scott, who went unsigned by the Lakers after 10 years of service, will return to the Forum on January 26 as a member of the Indiana Pacers. He already is thinking about it.

"There will be some mixed emotions the first time I go back to the Forum," says Scott, who scored 12,254 points while playing his first 10 seasons for the Lakers. "I had a great time there, but the last couple of years, I wasn't happy. I really feel, the last couple of years, I wasn't treated well."

Seeing Red

Another person looking down the road is Lenny Wilkens. With the Atlanta Hawks having won 14 straight before finally losing last Thursday to Indiana, their coach is up to 885 career victories, just 54 behind all-time NBA leader Red Auerbach. Wilkens has started to think about reaching 1,000 before he's through.

"It sits way in the back of the mind because you're close enough to it," he says. "And if I stay healthy and things go right, I've got a chance for that, and I'd like to do that."

Of those victories, 316 came as Cleveland's coach. When Wilkens went back to Richmond Coliseum last week and saw his team win, there was extra satisfaction.

"He walked into the locker room with the biggest smile on his face," says Hawks guard Craig Ehlo, who played for Wilkens on the Cavs.

Hold the garlic

Annoyed by the long time Hornets center Alonzo Mourning took before shooting free throws (the limit is 10 seconds), Nets Coach Chuck Daly began clocking him on his watch and complaining to the officials.

That, in turn, annoyed Mourning and Hornets Coach Allan Bristow.

"His team is losing, and he's worried about me shooting free throws?" Mourning says. "Hasn't he got anything better to do? I don't know why a coach would worry about something like that. I told him to shut up."

Says Bristow: "Talk about something dragging out the game, look at them running their half-court offense."

Daly retorted, "Mourning cost me a 12:30 pasta date in Fort Lee (N.J.)."

TSN POWER POLL

Team	W-L	Last wk	Team	W-L	Last wk
1. Rockets	21-1	1	15. Clippers	9-12	16
2. Sonics	19-2	2	16. Heat	9-11	17
3. Suns	16-4	4	17. Nuggets	9-13	14
4. Hawks	16-5	3	18. Lakers	8-15	18
5. Knicks	15-5	5	19. Pistons	8-13	20
6. Jazz	17-7	7	20. Cavaliers	7-14	15
7. Bulls	13-8	11	21. Nets	8-14	22
8. Spurs	15-9	6	22. Wolves	8-14	23
9. Magic	12-9	10	23. 76ers	8-14	24
10. Warriors	12-10	12	24. Bullets	6-16	21
11. Blazers	13-10	8	25. Kings	5-16	25
12. Hornets	12-10	9	26. Bucks	5-17	26
13. Celtics	11-12	13	27. Mavs	1-21	27
14. Pacers	10-11	19			

Through Saturday's games

THE SPORTING NEWS Power Poll is determined by TSN editors and contributing writer Tim Poutak.

BY THE NUMBERS

Home teams in recent years have started a tradition — giving games away.

Since 1984-85, home teams have won only 58.1 percent of their games from Christmas Day through New Year's Day, compared with 65.3 percent of their other regular-season games.

Year	Christmas week			All other games		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
'84-85	18	21	.462	583	321	.645
'85-86	17	18	.486	600	308	.661
'86-87	20	15	.571	607	301	.669
'87-88	19	16	.543	621	287	.684
'88-89	26	8	.765	668	323	.674
'89-90	28	14	.667	685	380	.643
'90-91	25	14	.641	705	363	.660
'91-92	21	19	.525	678	389	.635
'92-93	23	17	.575	653	414	.612
TOTAL	197	142	.581	5800	3086	.653

Each team's home record during Christmas week since 1984-85:

Team	W	L	Pct.	Team	W	L	Pct.
Celtics	1	0	1.000	Nuggets	9	7	.563
Jazz	18	4	.818	Knicks	9	7	.563
Hawks	8	2	.800	Cavaliers	10	8	.556
Rockets	4	1	.800	Heat	3	3	.500
Bucks	12	4	.750	Sonics	7	7	.500
Blazers	9	3	.750	Bullets	9	10	.474
Lakers	10	4	.714	Pacers	6	7	.462
Bulls	12	5	.706	Hornets	4	5	.444
Mavericks	9	4	.692	Magic	3	4	.429
Warriors	2	1	.667	Kings	5	9	.357
Spurs	8	4	.667	76ers	1	2	.333
Suns	11	6	.647	Wolves	2	6	.250
Nets	12	7	.632	Clippers	4	16	.200
Pistons	9	6	.600				

— BOB BELLOTTI

Bob Bellotti is the author of *The Points*. Created Pro Basketball Book 1993-94 (Night Work Publishing, 1-800-858-1177)

By somehow convincing recruits to play basketball in the frigid confines of Minneapolis, Clem Haskins has brought credibility to a Minnesota program that is on the verge of becoming a national power

Coming in

By BRUCE SCHOENFELD

Randy Carter was an All-American at Central High in Memphis, a relentless rebounder with a sweet shooting touch. Arkansas, Tennessee and Boston College were wooing him hard. Notre Dame was pitching the Golden Dome. Memphis State begged him to stay near home.

So Carter hardly rushed to the phone when the University of Minnesota called. He told Gophers Coach Clem Haskins that he didn't even know they played basketball. "There was nothing they could say to me," Carter says. "They couldn't talk weather and they couldn't talk tradition. They told me Kevin McHale had gone there, which didn't mean too much. I had never really heard of Minnesota, to tell you the truth."

Haskins asked Carter to visit the campus, selling quality of life and the chance to be in on the start of something. Four years later, the 6-foot-8 senior is the leading rebounder on a Minnesota team ranked 16th in the THE SPORTING NEWS' poll. The Gophers have been forecast by many to win the Big Ten, probably the nation's deepest conference, and perhaps reach the Final Four for the first time. Minnesota is better known for ice fishing and its high school hockey tournament than any college basketball success, but that could change before this season ends.

Haskins has built something as palpable — and surprising — as the glittering new silver castle of an art museum that overlooks the banks of the Mississippi near Williams Arena: credibility for the basketball program. He has done it by successfully recruiting some of the most talented high school players available. He enticed Carter to come from Memphis, Voshon Lenard from Detroit and Townsend Orr from Dolton, Ill., with each commitment giving him more selling power to carry into the next home.

After six years as the head coach at Western Kentucky and seven more at Minnesota, Haskins has reached the cusp of national recognition. What's missing are the visible accomplishments of a Big Ten title and a trip to the Final Four. Despite six seasons of 19 victories or more in Division I, he is rarely mentioned as one of basketball's prominent coaches.

But what he has done at Minnesota is remarkable. Before Haskins arrived in 1986, Gophers basketball history was mostly a series of embarrassing episodes bordering on the criminal. The 1972 team became famous when a riot during the Ohio State game made national headlines — and a pariah out of Coach Bill Musselman. Two years later, Musselman left town with 128 NCAA violations pending.

Jim Dutcher's Gophers won the Big Ten title in 1982 and 63 percent of their games over 11 seasons, but a rape investigation involving several players drove him from campus. There have been standouts through the seasons — Lou Hudson and Archie Clark, McHale and Ray Williams, Trent Tucker and Mychal Thompson — but only two NCAA Tournament appearances. "We don't have the basketball tradition here of Indiana, of Michigan, of Louisville," Haskins says. "We don't even have the basketball tradition of Western Kentucky. Not even close."

"Clem took over this program eight years ago when it was a source of embarrassment," Athletic Director McKinley Boston says. "And now it is a great source of pride. Every game is sold out. We're recruiting some of the top kids in the country, and that's without getting the national television exposure. We haven't exactly been a household name nationally."

The Gophers played one regular-season game on national television last season, the minimum as mandated by ESPN's contract with the conference. And without regular TV exposure, what could Haskins offer an inner-city recruit from, say, Memphis? Not a beach-



MITCHELL LAYTON

Almost there: After 13 years in coaching, Haskins has reached the cusp of national recognition.

from the cold

front campus like UCLA. Not a pastoral atmosphere of green grass and rolling hills like Kentucky and North Carolina. Certainly not weather: The perception of fearsome winters has even frightened away recruits from frigid Chicago. "Are you sure you want to take that job?" Knight once asked Musselman. "They ski up there 10 months a year, all except January and February because it's too cold."

As if that weren't enough, Minneapolis has a smaller percentage of blacks than any other urban area in the nation. The rock star Prince is from the city, and baseball's Kirby Puckett has made Minneapolis his home. In terms of national visibility, that's about it. Many big-city schools use ethnic diversity as part of their recruiting pitch; the joke in the Twin Cities is that diversity means Germans mixed in with the Swedes.

"When I first got here, I didn't think there were any black people at all," says Chris Smith, who plays for the NBA's Timberwolves. "If you want black culture, you really have to go out and look for it. If I was getting recruited to come to school here, I don't know what I'd think."

Yet Smith's coach, Sidney Lowe, is black. So is Dennis Green, the head coach of the NFL's Vikings. So is Boston, Haskins' boss. And as of early November, the city has a black woman, Sharon Sayles-Belton, as its newly elected mayor. Haskins describes to his recruits an atmosphere of equal opportunity, with everyone able to create his or her success based on merit. And the city delivers.

"Minneapolis is pretty free when it comes to that," says Carter, an Afro-American studies major. "I was surprised. Growing up in Memphis, half my high school was black. But there was very little contact between the races. I could sit next to a white kid in a class for nine months and we would never say a word. That would never happen here."

Haskins, 50, has been a race-relations pioneer wherever he has gone, from the time he personally integrated his high school in Taylor County, Ky., until he accepted the Gophers job and became the first black basketball coach in the history of the Big Ten. The irony is that he's on the brink of his greatest success now in Minneapolis, a city in which the only trail he has to blaze is his. He has been loved and reviled during his career merely because he is black. In Minneapolis, they seem to hardly even notice.

Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle were challenging Babe Ruth's single-season home run record in September 1961, and getting none of the hate mail that would torment Hank Aaron a generation later. Bill Russell and Wilt Chamberlain were dominating the NBA, but the vast majority of professional athletes were still white. In Campbellsville, Ky., where attitudes were perhaps not as different from the rest of the country's as some Northern liberals might have you believe, young Clem Haskins was about to become an activist.

It was a basketball decision, really. The coach at all-black Campbellsville Durham High School had left for a better job and Haskins' friends on the all-white Taylor County High School team urged him to transfer. He tried, but saw the doors of the school repeatedly locked in his face. For three weeks he attempted to attend classes, until police were called in. This was post-Little Rock, but long before Martin Luther King's march on Washington or the Civil Rights Act. No James Meredith or Jackie Robinson, Haskins questioned the wisdom of what he was doing.

"Sure I wondered," he says. "But in the end, my going to school there really opened up the community. Before long, there were jobs and opportunities for blacks where there hadn't been any before."

Offered an entry-level position at the Fruit of the Loom plant in Campbellsville during his senior year, he became the first black

to work for that company. The experience wasn't as stark as integrating the school, but in some ways it was even more difficult.

"By that time, it wasn't just the whites who were against me and talking behind my back," Haskins says. "Many of the blacks were convinced that it was a bad idea, too. It was hard, and I sure wouldn't do it again for Clem Haskins. But there evidently was a plan for me."

From Taylor County, Haskins moved on to Western Kentucky, where he and the late Dwight Smith became the first blacks to play basketball. A three-year All-American who would later become an inaugural member of the Western Kentucky Hall of Fame, Haskins averaged 22.1 points per game during his college career. The Hilltoppers went 66-15 in his three varsity seasons and made two NCAA Tournament appearances. Even today, basketball fans in that part of the country still talk of "Clem the Gem."

He played nine years in the NBA for the Bulls, Suns and Bullets, enjoying what was supposed to be a big league lifestyle. An informal quota system limited black players to no more than three for each team. He remembers getting refused service at restaurants in Alabama and North Carolina during some preseason trips. "We all got mad and left, but, really, there was nothing we could do," Haskins says.

Three years as a Western Kentucky assistant followed, and he became head coach when Gene Keady left. This was 1980, modern times, with Wayne Gretzky already starring in the NHL and Magic Johnson in the NBA and Ronald Reagan running for president, but Kentucky had never seen a black basketball coach at a major college. Many states still haven't.

Haskins' Hilltoppers won 21 games one year and 23 another, making two NCAA appearances and one in the National Invitation Tournament. By the time he left for Minnesota to take over a program reeling from the rape scandal, he already was tired of being categorized as a black coach. "I don't want to just be compared to

Big Ten, 1974 to '93

The highway to the Big Ten championship passes through Bloomington, Ind. — and it often doesn't get past the center of town. Over the past 20 seasons, Bob Knight's Hoosiers have won or shared the Big Ten championship half the time. By contrast, Minnesota has won it once — in 1982.

School	Big Ten titles*	NCAA trips	Comment
Indiana	10	16	Won three NCAA titles.
Michigan	4	12	In Final Four championship four times.
Purdue	4	11	Reached Final Four in '80.
Michigan State	3	7	Champions with Magic in '79.
Ohio State	2	8	Big Ten titles came in '90s.
Iowa	1	13	One Final Four trip in 13 tries.
Illinois	1	10	Lost to Michigan in '89 semifinals.
Minnesota	1	3	Two NCAA trips under Haskins.
Penn State	0	1	Second season in Big Ten.
Wisconsin	0	0	1941 NCAA champions.
Northwestern	0	0	One winning season in 20 years.

* Won or shared



Beating the odds: Haskins joins Lowe (left, with Micheal Williams) of the Timberwolves and Green of the Vikings as black coaches in a predominantly white city.

A team concept

In a different college program, Minnesota's Voshon Lenard might be scoring 25 or 30 points a game instead of the 17.1 he averaged as a sophomore last season.

"But I don't like to have one go-to guy," Coach Clem Haskins says. "I'd rather have four or five, so if you stop one, there'll be others coming at you. Voshon gets his 14 to 15 shots a game here, but that's it. If we went in and ran a lot of stuff for him, oriented the offense around him, there's no telling how much he'd score."

"It's an equal-scoring-opportunity offense," Lenard says. "I had to make the commitment when I came here to play in that kind of scheme, and I haven't regretted it once. The offense has been good to me and good to my teammates. And that's what matters."

Lenard is a 6-foot-4 guard and a former high school All-American who played with Michigan's Jalen Rose at Detroit's Southwestern High. Because Chris Webber had Minnesota on his final list of schools, it's possible to conceive of an alternate version of the vaunted Fab Five wearing Gophers gold. But Lenard says he actually came to Minnesota for the academics. A speech communications major, he was pleased to have a coach who stressed academics recruit him.

"Also, Coach Haskins wouldn't promise me a starting position, and that impressed me," Lenard says. "Everyone else was coming in and promising me everything, but all he said was that he'd give me a chance to show what I could do."

Here's what Lenard can do: He led the Gophers in scoring last year as a sophomore, earned second-team All-Big Ten honors, was chosen the MVP of the National Invitation Tournament last March after Minnesota beat Florida, Oklahoma, Southern California, Providence and Georgetown to win it and was listed as a preseason All-American by THE SPORTING NEWS as well as a number of other publications.

Now imagine what that list might look like if the offense gave him the ball.

—BRUCE SCHOENFELD

John Thompson and George Raveling," Haskins said. "My philosophy is, give me my due. What about Gene Keady? Lou Henson? How come I never hear those names?"

Haskins was certain he would do well under those comparisons, and he's even more self-assured today. Down deep, he believes he's the best coach around nobody knows about. "At one time it really bothered me, because I wanted everyone to realize that Clem Haskins could coach," he says. "Anymore, it doesn't bother me because I've convinced myself. Clem Haskins can coach! I'm as good a coach as anybody. No one is better, and very few are as good. When I walk on the court, there's no one out there who is going to outcoach me. I'm not saying I'm the best, but I'll hold my own against anyone."

His Gophers still haven't proved they can win the important game, however. In the past three seasons, they're 2-15 against the cream of the conference: Indiana, Michigan and Ohio State. And they've yet to construct a string of successful seasons lasting longer than two.

In 1990, Minnesota came within a single basket of the Final Four, losing the Southeast Regional by two points to Georgia Tech. Then Willie Burton, Richard Coffey and Melvin Newburn departed and two non-winning seasons followed, proving to Haskins just how hard it is to develop that continuity.

He believes he has it now. Last year's 17-10 club didn't get an NCAA invitation but ended up winning five more games and the NIT title. That nationally televised final, a 62-61 victory over Thompson and Georgetown, may have done the program more good than the NAAs would have. At least this year's recruits have heard about Minnesota.

"We were on TV one game after another," Haskins says. "We were in New York getting all that attention. We had something to prove, and we proved it. . . . We've now played deep into March three years out of the last seven, and I believe we've reached the point where we will consistently be one of the top 50 programs in the nation. Now, there will be years when we'll be No. 50. But there will also be years when we're No. 1."

In Minneapolis, which recently lost its NHL franchise for lack of support, it sometimes seems like the basketball Gophers already have reached that level. Williams Arena annually gets ranked among the most difficult places in the country for opponents to play. It's as though the locals are packed in the place, yelling and stomping, as a way to keep themselves warm.



"I'm as good a coach
as anybody.
No one is better,
and very few are as good."

"People don't realize the level of support they have," the Timberwolves' Lowe says. "I'm not ashamed to say that if we have a big game here and there's a big game at the U., we're going to lose some fans. The more you win, the more interested people become. And give him credit, Clem has won."

Haskins drives the streets of Minneapolis and waves to supporters from his Cadillac. "I know you'd expect me to be popular around here," he says, "but sometimes I walk out the door and — well, it's scary." He has a television show and good seats to Vikings games when he wants to go. He regularly fishes with Gov. Arne Carlson, a big Gophers fan who used to write Haskins an encouraging letter every week during the tough days at the beginning of his tenure.

When Bruce Willis, Demi Moore and Arnold Schwarzenegger opened one of their Planet Hollywood restaurants at the massive Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., with a big party earlier this month, Haskins wasn't merely on the guest list — he was part of the publicity campaign. That made him angry because he hadn't committed to attending. He thought they were using his name to get attention.

"But I guess that's what they can do to you when you're a celebrity," Haskins says.

Haskins has been going to booster club meetings for years now, but still he has to smile at the scene. There he is on a podium in front of perhaps 100 white men, mostly middle-aged and beyond. He's talking to them about the Minnesota basketball program. And they're listening hard.

"I've earned their respect in the seven, eight years that I've been here," Haskins says, punching at his standard-issue salad at a recent booster event. "This is part of the job of coaching Minnesota basketball. It's something you have to do."

Don Shelby, a news anchorman at a local TV station, sits at the head table. There are plenty of basketball fans in the Twin Cities, thousands of them who have attended a game at one time or another, but nobody else like Shelby. "I went to 135 basketball games last year," he says after stepping to the microphone to introduce Haskins. "Pro games. College men's and women's. High school. Eighth grade. Wheelchair. Two aquatic games." It makes one wonder what he'd do if he were a sportscaster.

In the audience is Swede Carlson, an NBA player with the old Minneapolis Lakers. He's 74 now, a half-century removed from the U., but still a rabid Gophers fan. He remembers when Johnny Kundla would address these meetings three decades ago — and Bill Fitch, and George Hanson, and every coach since. It makes his day just to have Haskins call him by name.

Haskins stands up and talks about Sam Jacobson, a Minnesota high school star who has committed recently to the Gophers for next season. Jacobson is being touted as the most talented player ever to come from the state, but, as usual, Haskins prefers to be cautious in public.

"Most of you have heard of Sam Jacobson," he says, fielding a question about recruits. "We feel he will have an impact as a freshman." Sitting at the head table, Shelby can't contain himself. He's scribbling numbers on a piece of paper. "44-in. Vertical," the paper reads. "6-5 — 4.0 GPA."

Haskins calls Tellis Frank, the former Western Kentucky star who plays for the Timberwolves, the best player he has ever coached. This time next year, Shelby says, Haskins may be saying something different.

Later, back in his car, Haskins talks about how far the program has come. "We never could have gotten a player like Sam Jacobson when I first got here," he says. "This kid is a top 10 player in the country as far as I'm concerned. He's the kind of kid you can't let leave your home state if you want to have any credibility at all, but we wouldn't have had a chance at him a few years ago. Why would a kid go to a program that had all the problems we had when I first got here?"

Outside the car a freezing rain has started to fall. This is what the weather will be like in Minneapolis all winter. "You get used to it," Haskins says. "I always said I would go back to Kentucky when I was ready to give up coaching, but you know what? Yvette and I just might stay around here. We just might buy a big house and retire here. We like it that much."

Haskins stops at a light not far from campus. Two men approach the corner, looking miserable as the rain falls. One of them is wearing a Minnesota sweatshirt under his heavy coat. He recognizes Haskins inside the car.

As the light changes, the man begins to wave.

Bruce Schoenfeld is a free-lance writer from Boulder, Colo.

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COLLEGE BASKETBALL REPORT

Beyond basketball,
a story worth tellingGene
WOJCIECHOWSKI

From his Pepperdine office, you can see the ocean's waves lapping at the white beaches of Malibu. The gentle, cool December breezes drift through the open window and arch the backs of assorted letters and notes on Coach Tom Asbury's cluttered desk.

It is heaven. It is hell.

Asbury, 48, leans forward in his chair and turns the framed photographs of his daughters for a visitor to see. Stacey is the one on the left and Megan, a freshman at Pepperdine, is on the right.

"That's her," he said, nodding toward Stacey. "Beautiful girls."

In the early-morning hours of September 12 — shortly after midnight, doctors estimate — Stacey Asbury left her upstairs bedroom, walked down a flight of steps, sat down when she reached the bottom stair and died. Stacey's heart, weakened to the point that it couldn't even support her starved 70-pound body, simply gave up.

Stacey was 22, and although the official cause of death was listed as heart failure, Asbury knows better. Now he wants others to know better, too.

Stacey died of anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder that reduced her from a healthy 5-foot-8, 130-pound teen-ager in 1988, to a stick figure in 1993. In the end, the mysterious illness consumed her and ultimately dictated her life — and then her death.

"Her body just couldn't take it anymore," says Carlie Asbury, Stacey's mother.

Don't ask how it happened because nobody knows. Not the Asburys. Not the doctors. The illness is so perplexing that Dr. Michael Strober, who oversees the eating disorder program at UCLA, where Stacey was a frequent patient, simply says, "I still feel humbled in its presence."

The Asburys tell their story reluctantly, not because they want sympathy, but because they hope for understanding and an end to the ignorance. Compassion can't be found in a Karen Carpenter joke. Awareness can't be produced by silence.

So they talk about their lost daughter, the one who used to be a Pepperdine ball girl, who used to sell sodas and pizza slices to the boys at the annual Pepperdine basketball camps, who used to cherish Christmas. Anorexia nervosa changed all that. It rendered a father and mother helpless, persuaded a daughter to shun food or to sneak downstairs in the middle of the night and do jumping jacks until she was soaked in sweat. It glor-

fied hunger.

"It's not like you can give them a pill," Carlie says. "It just seems so simple. Even Stacey saw the solution. But seeing the solution doesn't mean you can act on it."

Stacey's battle began shortly after she turned 16. She announced one day that she needed to lose a few pounds. Tom and Carlie thought nothing of it.

In a year's time, Stacey had eliminated sugar, red meats and most dairy products from her diet. If Carlie made a nice lunch, Stacey would throw it away. Instead, she would nibble at chicken, fish, salads and fruits.

It wasn't until Carlie returned from a week-long trip that she recognized the physical difference in her daughter. "It was like somebody hit me in the stomach," she says.

The Asbury family physician recommended a local psychologist for Stacey. Therapy started and by the end of Stacey's junior year in high school, everything appeared fine.

It wasn't. Four months later, Stacey began restricting her diet even more. Rice cakes and yogurt replaced poultry and fish. Often, she would eat nothing at all.

The textbook symptoms of anorexia nervosa had revealed themselves. Stacey fit the profile to the letter: adolescent... a pathological willingness to diet to the point of malnutrition... exaggerated and inexplicable sensitivity to weight and body shape. "The dread of body fat," is the way Dr. Strober puts it.

According to best estimates — and that's all they are at this point — from one-half to 1 percent of college-age women suffer from some form of anorexia. An estimated 100,000 people overall are afflicted, although the illness is predominantly linked to women.

From 50 to 60 percent of those diagnosed



Sharing a tragedy: Asbury's daughter Stacey died September 12, a victim of anorexia nervosa. She was 22.

with anorexia nervosa eventually overcome the major symptoms of the disorder. Sadly, 3 to 5 percent die from the illness within 10 years.

Strober, who has studied anorexia for almost 20 years, says the condition seems to develop in persons with certain personality traits: extreme perfectionists, those who need order, certainty and routine in their lives. Anorexia victims normally are emotionally sensitive, uncomfortable with change, compliant and reliant on the judgment of others.

In other words, Stacey.

As the illness took hold, Stacey began delaying her meals. She would eat breakfast at noon, dinner at midnight. With the exception of Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas, she seldom would eat with the family.

She joined at least seven health clubs and exercised constantly. She would look in the mirror, see nothing more than a 90-pound frame and, incredibly, think she was fat.

"You could have put her in a cheese box and she would have found a way to exercise," says Dr. Joel Yager, who specializes in anor-

exia nervosa research at UCLA's Neuropsychiatric Institute.

There were hospital stays. Twelve-step self-help programs. Visits to hypnotists. Anti-depressant and anti-compulsion medicines. Nothing worked.

At one point, the Asburys confided in a local doctor who had treated Tom for an unrelated illness. They patiently detailed Stacey's condition and then, in horror, listened as the doctor suggested a treatment that smacked of medieval medicine.

"I've got a cure for her," the physician said. "We'll strap her down and we'll force-feed her."

Stacey, Asbury says, didn't want to die. She was helpless against the

illness. She became so obsessed with her weight, that she would constantly fidget with her fingers and wrists, feeling for fat. Clinic attendants, worried about her reaction to weight gain, would only weigh her with her back to the scale.

Stacey's body organs began to deteriorate. They screamed for food, but Stacey wouldn't — she couldn't — give them any.

"As a parent," Carlie says, "you want to take on the pain of your child. You think you're going to take away their pain, but when you can't it's a terrible feeling. We wish we could. We would have in a heartbeat."

Asbury is no different. He grieves for his daughter and for his own father, who died November 17.

"Losing a parent is one thing, losing a child is a whole different thing," he says. "My dad was 86 and he lived a great life. He was in great health for almost his whole life. So that's part of life, that's just the natural order of things."

"But this," he says, punching the bridge of his nose to hold back the tears, "this isn't the natural order of things."



Playing again: Tyler returned to the Texas lineup with an impressive game.

Growing
pains

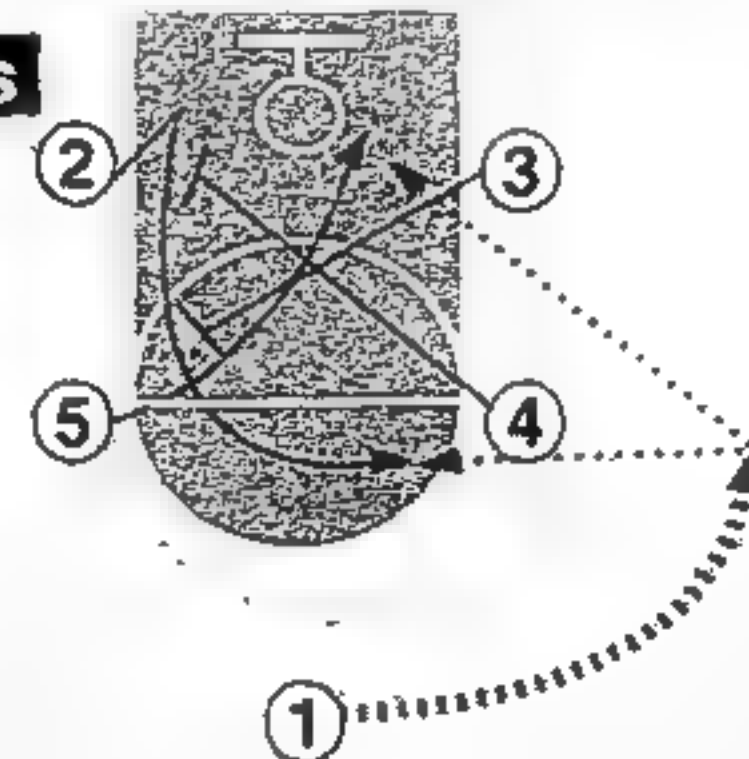
While the Big Eight and Southwest conferences reportedly talk about a partnership, the Midwestern Collegiate Conference acts. The MCC recently added Northern Illinois, Wright State, Wisconsin-Green Bay, Cleveland State and Wisconsin-Milwaukee to its league roster. The new additions previously were members of the Mid-Continent Conference. ... Texas point guard B.J. Tyler, who missed the fall semester for personal reasons, made his long-awaited debut and played like he had never been gone. In a loss to Connecticut, Tyler started and scored 16 points in 28

minutes. He also made five steals and the most impressive dunk of the evening. With Tyler back, the Longhorns' days of

sub-500 basketball are numbered.

Gene Wojciechowski covers college basketball for the Los Angeles Times.

X's & O's



Both Southern Cal and LSU use this play. It takes advantage of teams that switch. The screens from 3 on 5 and 4 on 2 are "little on big" and "big on little." If the defenders switch, it creates mismatches. The point guard, 1, first looks for 5, either open off the screen or mismatched posting up against a smaller defender. The point guard next looks to 2.

NCAA

Another wrong turn

For the second week in a row, a college coach has been suspended one game for treating a player too harshly. We only can hope Bob Knight has not started another trend.

R.C. Buford, an assistant in his first season on Lon Kruger's Florida coaching staff, drew the latest suspension Sunday after shoving a Florida State player.

With 3:47 to go and Florida State in the midst of a furious comeback toward a 69-59 victory, Bob Sura ran into Florida's bench area after a loose ball. Sura landed on the laps of the Florida coaches. When he got up, Buford shoved Sura hard back onto the court with a forearm. Sura threw the basketball at Buford, hitting him in the chest.

Sura received a technical foul, Buford a stern, finger-pointed lecture from official Andre Patillo. When replays were shown, the crowd of 12,623 booed Buford.

The rivalry is heated enough. The game was one for the emotions — certainly more intense than the blowout in which Knight slammed son Pat against a chair on the bench.

Immediately after last weekend's game, Buford, a former assistant under Larry Brown at Kansas and the Clippers, met with Kruger and Athletic Director Jeremy Foley. "I should



Knight wants Florida punishes Buford.

have handled it differently," says Buford, who apologized in person to Florida State Coach Pat Kennedy but could not get to Sura.

Says Foley: "You can't accept that, can you? I don't think I can."

In announcing the suspension on Sunday, Foley said Buford "understands this course of action. . . . We just felt that after reviewing the films, the institution needed to take some action, and we felt this was appropriate. He's paying a huge penalty in terms of negative publicity and his own feelings, so to drag it out beyond that was not appropriate."

Kennedy downplays the incident. "It's no problem at all," Kennedy says.

Saturday's incident was the latest in a series of negative events within Florida's basketball program and athletic department:

■ In August, sophomore power forward Ben Davis, a transfer from Kansas who was considered Florida's best signee since Dwayne Schintzius, was declared permanently ineligible after failing multiple drug tests.

■ Sophomore forward Brian Thompson was suspended for three games this season for missing too many classes.

■ Senior football player Willie Jackson, a wide receiver, was suspended for two games for his altercation with campus police November 5.

■ Women's swimming Coach Mitch Ivey was fired in October after allegations of sexual harassment were made in an ESPN broadcast.

"It's frustrating because we've worked very, very hard to do things the right way," Foley told the Orlando Sentinel. "We are an institution that — as I said during the Mitch Ivey thing — has a lot to be proud of. We take a lot of pride in our successes and the type of people we have working for us." ♦

Loitering allowed

Kansas Coach Roy Williams wants the closely guarded rule back, and he wants it back this season.

The rule — which required a dribbler to give up the ball if a defender was nearby for five seconds — was eliminated this season.

"I despise the rule that lets a guy stand out there and dribble, dribble, dribble," Williams says. "I don't think that's what James Naismith meant the game of basketball to be."

Others do think it is what the game was meant to be, especially the referees, who used the annual forum of the

NCAA survey to express their displeasure at the rule. When Hank Nichols, secretary of the rules committee, met to discuss the survey with coaches during the Final Four weekend, only a handful showed up.

Williams has written the NCAA News and plans to write the 12 members of the rules committee to lobby for the return of the rule.

No doubt about it

When Kevin Salvadori enrolled at North Carolina four years ago, there were doubters even in his hometown of Pittsburgh.

"People said I wasn't big



Only the best: Salvadori starts at North Carolina.

enough, wasn't strong enough and that only the best can play at North Carolina," Salvadori says. "Very few people thought I was going to make it."

Salvadori, a 7-footer, starts at power forward. He is shooting 58 percent from the field, averaging 8.9 points and 6.5 rebounds, and leads the team in blocked shots.

Pittsburgh has noticed. "Now it seems like everybody's on my side," Salvadori says. "It's a great feeling coming back on a good note."

School of medicine

It may be time to check out the intramural talent at Arizona State. The Sun Devils have only seven scholarship players left for this sea-

son. Of the starters, guard Quincy Brewer has a broken kneecap, guard Marcell Capers a broken foot, center Robert Conlisk mononucleosis and forward Mario Bennett a knee that underwent surgery.

Last week, Isaac Burton and Ron Riley went down with sprained ankles. "The bad luck continues," Coach Bill Frieder says.

Frieder added three walk-ons. One is Eli Lopez, the brother of Pepperdine guard Damon Lopez. Eli is listed as 5 feet 10. "He's a good little player, but his size-9 shoe should tell you something," Frieder says.

Football isn't the only problem

The Southwest Conference, coming off a horrendous football season, was 19-23 in non-conference games entering this week. Overall, the SWC is making 42.6 percent of its field-goal attempts, 31.8 percent of its 3-pointers and 62.3 percent of its free throws.

Texas A&M epitomized the offensive statistics in its 67-48 loss at home last Saturday to unbeaten Northwestern. In the first half, the Aggies missed all 11 3-point tries (they're shooting 16.9 percent through five games) and were 5 for 36 from the floor (13.8 percent). A&M warmed up in the second half and finished 17 of 76 (23.6 percent). ♦

TSN TOP 25

Team	W-L	Last week
1. Arkansas	6-0	1
2. North Carolina	8-1	2
3. Duke	5-0	3
4. Kentucky	4-1	6
5. Temple	4-0	4
6. UCLA	5-0	7
7. Kansas	9-1	5
8. Michigan	5-1	8
9. Massachusetts	7-1	9
10. Purdue	8-0	11
11. Louisville	4-1	10
12. Arizona	6-0	13
13. Indiana	5-1	12
14. Connecticut	6-0	19
15. Georgia Tech	6-1	15
16. Minnesota	6-2	14
17. Wisconsin	5-0	17
18. Illinois	5-1	20
19. Boston College	6-0	23
20. Cincinnati	7-2	18
21. Oklahoma State	6-2	16
22. George Washington	5-1	22
23. Syracuse	6-1	21
24. Vanderbilt	4-2	24
25. Louisiana State	4-1	25

*Through Saturday's games.

Others receiving votes: Florida State, Marquette, Virginia, California, Western Kentucky, Xavier, Alabama-Birmingham, Old Dominion, West Virginia, New Mexico State, Kansas State, Washington State.

Contributing correspondents: Wendell Barnhouse, Michael Bradley, B.G. Brooks, Chuck Carree, Tom Collins, Tom Ginetti, Bruce Hooley, Andy Katz, Bob Lutz, Alan Schmadtke, Lenn Robbins, Gene Wojciechowski and Lynn Zinser.

GAMES TO WATCH

Minnesota at Virginia, Tuesday: The Gophers have had troubles on the road under Clem Haskins, but if they can win this one, it would send a message to the Big Ten that this season will be different.

UCLA vs. N.C. State, Tuesday in Greensboro, N.C.: This game was brought to the new Greensboro Coliseum as a reunion of the two programs that battled for the NCAA title in 1974, with N.C. State ending UCLA's reign. Now it's N.C. State on the way down and UCLA back on the way up. The game should be more symbolic than competitive.

Temple vs. Georgia Tech, Monday in New York: Two programs that aren't afraid of tough games, they meet in the first round of the ECAC Holiday Festival.

Oklahoma at Texas, Monday: Sooners Coach Billy Tubbs says he was being light-hearted when he suggested Oklahoma should move to the Southwest Conference. Perhaps he was considering his 5-0 record against Texas Coach Tom Penders.



Lobbying: Williams misses the closely guarded rule.

INSIDER

ATLANTIC COAST

Litmus test: One of the Southeastern Conference's better teams had an interesting clash with the ACC. Vanderbilt tangled with Wake Forest and Georgia Tech and both games were thrillers. At home against Wake Forest, Vandy forced an overtime after being down by five late and blew by the Deacons in the second OT after star Randolph Childress fouled out in the first overtime. Against Georgia Tech, the Commodores blew a lead, and the Yellow Jackets bombarded them in overtime. If Vandy can play with Tech in Atlanta, it must be awfully good. And if Wake can play with Vandy in Nashville, it must be better than everyone thinks, too.

Williams wows them: North Carolina guard Donald Williams has been superb. He is averaging 20 points per game — hard to do in Coach Dean Smith's share-the-wealth system — and has been the Tar Heels' most reliable force. In an 81-69 victory over Ohio State, Williams (26 points) took over when Ohio State had tied it at 58 with six minutes to go. Williams' 14 straight points turned a nail-biter into a highlight reel. Says point guard Derrick Phelps: "When he's open, we just run back down the floor because we know it's going in." ... Remember the name Joe Smith. The Maryland freshman wasn't supposed to be much of a factor, but he is playing better than all three of the Tar Heels' fab frosh — combined. —LYNN ZISER

ATLANTIC 10

Temple of gloom and doom: How can Temple's John Chaney say the things he does with a straight face? His undefeated Owls have whipped Kansas and Cincinnati, and Chaney is doing all he can to belittle them. "You can believe me or your own lying eyes," he says. "We're a Top 50 team." Not even if they include the NBA and CBA. Coach Chaney's players certainly disagree. "We're a Top 10 team," Eddie Jones says. "Top 5," Rick Brunson says. ... You can bet Rutgers Coach Bob Wenzel will be as excited to see first-semester grades as any undergraduate. If 6-foot-3 UConn transfer Rich Ashmeade does well enough, he could provide immediate help for the Scarlet Knights' thin backcourt. Right now, Wenzel is using a pair of newcomers, 5-7 Pete Marcotte and 6-2 freshman Charles Jones, in place of injured junior point man Damon Santiago (stress fracture in his right foot) and departed gunner Steve Worthy.

Getting tadar: In a move designed to help his team compete in the Atlantic 10, Duquesne Coach John Carroll has moved 6-11 Derrick Alston to forward and inserted 7-2 Ricky Lopes, heretofore a little-used reserve, in the pivot. Lopes has been productive, and though his rebounding numbers are off somewhat, Alston is scoring more from the four spot. George Washington is still searching for a consistent scorer besides 7-1 center Yinka Dare. —MICHAEL BRADLEY

BIG EAST

Unbeatens: Connecticut and Boston College started 6-0, with some impressive victories. The Huskies won at Virginia, 77-36, and beat Texas, 96-86, at home. The Eagles won at Syracuse, 75-58, four days after winning at Arizona State, 78-74. ... Junior-

college transfer James Scott of St. John's struggled in his first few games, but he seems to have adjusted to Division I. He had 26 points on 10-for-15 shooting in a 98-72 victory over Fordham. Scott put an exclamation point on the day with a 180-degree dunk. "Twenty-six points is just the beginning," Scott says. "There's more to come."

New newcomer: Miami's Steve Frazier, a redshirt freshman who was the league's preseason choice for Rookie of the Year, is out with a sore knee that forced him to miss last season. Connecticut freshman Ray Allen hasn't wasted any time filling the void left by Frazier. He is shooting 70.9 percent from the field and 64.3 percent on 3-pointers. Allen, who is averaging 17 points, scored 13 in a 26-3 run that led the Huskies to a come-from-behind victory at Seton Hall. ... Providence's 108-48 victory over St. Francis was the largest margin of victory in school history. Point guard Abdul Abdullah has 227 assists and 84 turnovers for his career, the best ratio in school history. ... Syracuse guard Adrian Autry made his 100th career 3-pointer. —LENN ROBBINS

BIG EIGHT

Applying the brakes: Kansas State opened the 1993-94 season as it closed 1992-93. Last season, K-State allowed a league-low 67.0 points a game. Through six games this season, the Wildcats were allowing 58.5. When Kansas State holds its opponents to fewer than 70 points, its record is 19-3. The Wildcats didn't allow 100 points last season and allowed 90 just once. ... Come January, comfy Gallagher-Iba Arena in Stillwater will be a welcome sight for Oklahoma State. The Cowboys will have played three of their first 12 games in Stillwater (although they will have played three games in Tulsa). Also, the Cowboys opened the season by playing seven games in 16 days. Their first real rest is an eight-day break before the Rainbow Classic next week in Honolulu. ... Through last Saturday, Kansas had 122 victories since the 1989-90 season — two fewer than Duke, the national leader.

Search goes on: In 26-plus years as Missouri's coach, Norm Stewart has never shied from experimenting with his lineup. Last season, Stewart used 15 starting lineups. He used four in the Tigers' first four games this season. Message to prospects: Sign on with Stewart and you will probably start — at least one game. ... Nebraska's balancing act is among the Big Eight's best. Through seven games, nine Cornhuskers had scored in double figures at least once. —B.G. BROOKS

BIG TEN

Small but effective: Iowa can't be disappointed with its 4-1 start. Academic problems took three players off the Hawkeyes' roster, leaving them with nine on scholarship. Coach Tom Davis is using a three-guard lineup with no one taller than 6 feet 7. ... Minnesota hopes to get junior forward Jayson Walton, out three weeks after arthroscopic knee surgery, for its game Tuesday at Virginia. Walton has suffered from osteomyelitis, an infection of the bone marrow, since age 7. This surgery was his fourth, and Coach Clem Haskins hopes it will allow Walton to play as he did last season when he was the



One-man show: Williams scored 14 in a row in crunch time to bury Ohio State

team's second-leading scorer. "Without him, we're just an average team," Haskins says.

Waiting on Jud: Michigan State assistant Tom Izzo was told this past summer he would be the Spartans' next head coach, but when that will happen is up to Jud Heathcote. Heathcote, 66, has vacillated about coaching beyond this season, his 18th in East Lansing. ... Indiana has never lost in 11 Hoosier Classics, but its path to a 12th championship Monday and Tuesday appears tougher with Western Kentucky in the field. ... Ohio State could get Kentucky this week in the second round of the Maui Classic. The Buckeyes are 0-7 against the Wildcats in regular-season games dating to 1943, but they are 5-0 against Kentucky during that period in the NCAA Tournament. —BRUCE HOOLEY

BIG WEST

For the record: Only three teams in the Big West had winning records entering the week. New Mexico State stood at 4-1, and Pacific and Long Beach State were 4-2. Take away the non-Division I victories, and the Aggies would be 2-1, Pacific 3-2 and Long Beach State 2-2. The conference's most widely known team, UNLV, finally got its first victory last Saturday (93-77 over Loyola Marymount). Big West teams have played only one team that is ranked. Long Beach State and UNLV played UCLA and lost. ... Pacific's Michael Jackson was averaging 24.7 points per game until San Diego proved he is mortal. Jackson scored 16 points and the Tigers lost, 83-66.

McCarthy's milestone: Neil McCarthy, in his ninth season at New Mexico State, has become the school's all-time winningest coach. McCarthy passed Lou Henson, now at Illinois, with his 174th victory. Henson won his 173 in nine complete seasons. McCarthy is in the middle of his ninth. ... Patrick Savoy and Clayton Johnson, UNLV's top junior-college transfer forwards, are battling injuries. Savoy is playing on a sprained ankle; Johnson has a nagging knee injury stemming from preseason arthroscopic surgery. ... Utah State still seeks a Division I victory. The Utags beat Lewis & Clark last Saturday but are the only Division I school on Lewis & Clark's schedule. —ANDY KATZ

COLONIAL

The right choice: Richmond senior forward Michael Hodges, who considered transferring early in his career, leads the Spiders with averages of 18 points and 10.8 rebounds through four games. That's a considerable improvement over the 9.8 points and 4.3 rebounds Hodges averaged last season. "He thought about leaving a few years ago," first-year Coach Bill Dooley says. "It's not uncommon. He wanted to play more. He certainly made the right decision."

Monarchs miss record: Old Dominion's bid to match its best start in history fell short with a 101-87 loss to Auburn. The 5-0 Monarchs were trying to duplicate the 6-0 mark of 1979-80, their best start in Division I competition. The school record was 7-0 in 1960-61. ... Although William & Mary was winless after three games, guard Kurt Small led conference scorers with a 25.7-point average. Small matched the school record with 19 free throws in a career-high 29-point effort against The Citadel. ... UNC Wilmington won four consecutive games after an 0-2 start. The catalysts were forward Corey Stewart, a transfer from Virginia, and guard Chris Meighen. Stewart was MVP of the Golden Panther Invitational, won by the Seahawks at Florida International, and Meighen earned MVP honors when the Seahawks captured their own USAir East Coast Classic championship. —CHUCK CARREE

GREAT MIDWEST

Bartow joins 600 club: Gene Bartow lists Oliver Robinson, Chris Giles and Steve Mitchell among the top players he has coached at Alabama-Birmingham, but he will remember senior forward Robert Shannon for the 25 points he scored in Bartow's 600th career victory, a 79-59 victory over Hawaii. The victory gave Bartow, 64, the milestone in his 32nd coaching season and his 16th since starting UAB's program. Only 27 college coaches at any level (and only eight active coaches) have reached the 600 mark. Bartow (601-316) hints this could be his final year. "I definitely won't go for 700."

Bad and good for Bearcats: Defending conference champion Cincinnati suffered its second loss to a ranked team (88-72 to No. 4 Temple). The other loss was to then-No. 1 North Carolina. But junior guard LaZelle Durden returned from academic ineligibility with a career-high 26, including eight 3-pointers. ... Marquette rebounded from a one point loss to Green Bay with victories over Big Ten members Illinois and Ohio State. Senior forward Damon Key earned player-of-the-week honors for a season-high 29 points and a career-high 14 rebounds against Ohio State. ... DePaul fought off a flu epidemic to post its fourth consecutive victory. Junior guard Brandon Cole sparked against Illinois State and Northeastern Illinois, averaging 22.5 points. —TOMI GINETTA

METRO

Mixed emotions: Virginia Commonwealth fans are happy with one senior guard, worried about another — but not in the expected order. Point guard Kenny Harris is struggling. Off-guard Terrence Gibson is shooting lights out. Gibson might be the

conference's most improved player, averaging 21.5 points, 5 rebounds and 2.5 assists. Harris, a North Carolina transfer who averaged 11.3 points and 6.3 assists last season, has been having a hard time coping with the death of his father earlier this month. Rams Coach Sonny Smith allowed Harris to miss practice time, but Harris insisted on playing the night of his father's funeral. "It's affecting him," Smith says.

Slow return: Southern Mississippi freshman point guard Damien Smith is playing after sitting out the fall semester under suspension for discharging a firearm on campus. Smith, who was not allowed to practice, went 0 for 6 in his season debut against Mississippi State. . . . The conference's best per-minute performer might be UNC Charlotte's Jermain Parker, a backup center. Parker has 20 blocked shots in 60 minutes of action. . . . The Metro's best non-conference start in 14 years was cooled off by Virginia Commonwealth, Southern Mississippi and Virginia Tech losses on the same night. Metro teams had opened 25-6, the best mark since 1978-79. —ALAN SCHMADTKE



Trying times: Durham vents his frustration while failing again to log victory No. 500.

MIDWESTERN COLLEGIATE

A lot of defense: Evansville has been known for aggressive defensive play from the moment Jim Crews was named coach in 1985. This year's team, thought to be in a rebuilding stage, may be one of Crews' stingiest. Despite the absence of a towering presence in the middle (like what 7-foot-1 Sascha Hupmann offered the last three seasons), Evansville continues to limit opponents to around 40 percent shooting from the floor. Crews has another 7-footer, sophomore Scott Sparks, but he doesn't match Hupmann for intimidation. Instead, Crews has several players capable of one-on-one confrontations in the open court. While the Aces are making 44 percent of their 3-point attempts, they are holding opponents to 27 percent. . . . Evansville joined the ranks of Division I teams winning 1,000 games with an 86-53 blowout of previously unbeaten Kent State last Saturday. . . . Another team flexing its muscles on defense is Butler. During the Bulldogs' recent three-game winning streak, they held opponents to a .298 field-goal percentage.

A little offense: Detroit Mercy's Tony Tolbert finally is getting some help. Tolbert is averaging 23.5 points of the Titans' 63 points. In the last two games, junior guard Michael Jackson has scored 50. . . . Brian Grant continues his climb up Xavier's all-time scoring list. He has surpassed the 1,300 plateau, good for 12th place. —TOM COLLINS

MISSOURI VALLEY

Shooting weak: Bradley did the reputation of the Missouri Valley Conference no favors last week against Oregon State. The Braves scored 12 first-half points and were beaten 54-42. Bradley shot 32 percent after missing 10 of its first 11 shots. . . . Only two Valley teams, Tulsa and Southern Illinois, have had any kind of eye. Both are shooting around 50 percent, but no other team is above 43 percent. . . . Shooting slumps have hit some of the Valley's best players. Southwest Missouri State's Johnny Murdock is shooting 35 percent after six games. Northern Iowa forward Randy Blocker, another of the conference's stars, was at 37 percent.

In the spotlight: Tulsa is hoping for the return of 6-foot-4 freshman Shea Seals, the Valley's top scorer, for Thursday's game at home against No. 1-ranked Arkansas. Seals missed last week with a leg injury. Seals, a Tulsa native, is one player not shooting poorly. In three games, he is 25 of 37 overall and 13 of 17 from 3-point range. . . . Senior point guard K.C. Hunt quit Wichita State the day before the game at Southwest Missouri State. Hunt said he had grown tired of losing; the team was 23-57 as he played in all but three games. Without him, the Shockers looked miserable during a 58-41 loss and fell to 1-4. Hunt, who was averaging 10.4 points and a Valley-high 6.5 assists, also dropped out of school to return to his home near Cleveland. —BOB LUTZ

PACIFIC 10

Something's brewin': The Bruins are playing in March form, scoring 100 points in three of their first five games while at the same time beating teams by an average of 27.8 points. Four of the five starters are shooting a combined 52.5 from the field, led by Charles O'Bannon's 63.6 percent. Yet the Bruins probably wouldn't have won the first five if not for Tyus Edney and George Zidek. Edney has been playing the point with a variety of ailments. He started the season with a bad back, then had patella tendinitis in his right knee, a right thigh strain and a severely bruised right clavicle. Zidek, the 7-foot junior from Prague, is averaging 10.6 points and 7.2 rebounds in 21 minutes per game. He had a career-high 17 in a victory over LSU last Saturday. Zidek averaged 2.4 points and 1.7 rebounds in nine minutes per game last season. "Without a doubt, he's improved the most on the team," Coach Jim Harrick says. . . . Arizona got its revenge with an 89-63 victory over Santa Clara last Saturday. The Broncos upset Arizona in the first round of the NCAA Tournament last season.

Orr is on: Southern Cal junior Lorenzo Orr is the reason the Trojans are off to a 5-1 start. He is shooting 60.7 percent from the field and has a tremendous blocks-to-turnovers ratio. Orr, who had five blocks against Cal State Sacramento last Saturday, has 13 blocks to 12 turnovers. —ANDY KATZ

SOUTHEASTERN

Past and future: Georgia Coach Hugh Durham, who lost in his first two attempts to record his 500th victory, isn't racing toward retirement. But Durham, 56, and Georgia Athletic Director Vince Dooley face several



Super shot: LSU's Ronnie Henderson (20) and Sean Gipson find it difficult to stop O'Bannon in UCLA's 100-80 victory

issues before finalizing a contract extension. The Bulldogs' graduation rate has been low, and last year's team grade-point average was 2.2 (on a 4.0 scale) — nearly a full point below the women's team's. In addition, the Bulldogs haven't won an NCAA Tournament game since 1985, and last season's average home attendance (5,958) was the lowest since Durham was hired in 1978.

Tide additions: Alabama is relying on freshman Antonio McDyess, who averaged 19.3 points and 10.7 rebounds in the Tide's first three home games. Forward Jamal Faulkner, a 6-foot-7 transfer from Arizona State, gains his eligibility in time for the conference opener January 5 at South Carolina. . . . It's no coincidence Arkansas' Al Dillard leads the conference in 3-point shooting. Dillard, a junior-college transfer who made a league-record 12 3-pointers in a victory against Delaware State on December 18, shoots 155 long jump shots every day in practice. . . . Arkansas maintained its No. 1 ranking last Saturday with a 96-80 victory over Jackson State, but Coach Nolan Richardson said, "We didn't play well, we just outscored them." —ALAN SCHMADTKE

SOUTHWEST

The percentages: Texas guard Terrence Rencher is the second-leading career scorer (behind Michigan's Jalen Rose) in this year's junior class. Through five games, Rencher was averaging 17.6 points per game, but shooting 37.5 percent from the field and 23.5 percent from 3-point range. . . . Texas Christian junior center Kurt Thomas, the SWC's leading scorer, will try to play the rest of this season with a broken bone at the base of his left thumb. Thomas says he sustained the injury as a freshman and aggravated it December 9 against Oklahoma State. He missed 13 games his sophomore year and all last season because of fractures in his left leg.

Another one goes: TCU's James Williams, a

6-5 senior who was averaging 19.5 minutes per game, quit the team because he was "miserable" in Coach Moe Iba's half-court offense. Williams is the 25th player to leave TCU since Iba took over in 1987. . . . Nearly 26 years after Houston defeated UCLA, 71-69, in the Astrodome, the school retired Elvin Hayes' No. 44 during halftime ceremonies of the Houston-UCLA game. Hayes' jersey is the first retired by Houston. . . . Baylor senior Willie Sublett, who has averaged nearly four fouls per game and has fouled out 33 times in 88 games, did not commit a foul December 11 against Weber State. —WENDELL BARNHOUSE

SUN BELT

Thinking three: Jacksonville's improvement can be traced from inside and out. The Dolphins lead the league in rebound margin (11.8), and they are on track to eclipse the school record for 3-pointers in a season (188, set in 1986-87). At the current pace (with 48 3-pointers already in the books before Christmas), they will finish with more than 200. . . . The most productive long-range team, however, is Arkansas State, which makes an average of nine 3-pointers a game. It's a nice statistic, but Coach Nelson Catalina would prefer some more muscle inside. "The thing we're doing is living and dying by the arc," he says. "We don't need to rely always on the bazooka."

A key victory: Western Kentucky has the early leg up in the conference race, thanks to an 81-71 victory at South Alabama. South Alabama had beaten the Hilltoppers five of the past seven times they had met. . . . The Sun Belt's power rating will fall because teams have cooled after their hot start. Arizona (over New Orleans), Oklahoma (over Lamar), DePaul (over Jacksonville) and New Mexico (over Texas-Pan American) dealt blows to the conference, which depends on upsets for headlines and higher power ratings. —ALAN SCHMADTKE

WESTERN ATHLETIC

Final decision: Utah forward Ed Johnson, a 6-foot-10 sophomore who sat out last season after having transferred from Lamar University, was suspended for the the season and most likely will transfer again. Coach Rick Mayerus said the season-long suspension was for a "violation of team rules," stemming from a six-game suspension for a campus-cafeteria altercation and Johnson's subsequent absence from an exhibition game and practice. He was predicted by many to be the WAC newcomer of the year, but Utah (5-2) might have a replacement for that category. Freshman Keith Van Horn was averaging 19.4 points and 9.6 rebounds.

Rainbow worries: Hawaii (2-6), which plays host to the Rainbow Classic beginning Monday, had been playing largely without starting guard Trevor Ruffin, who has a severely pinched nerve in his left shoulder. Ruffin played in only two of the team's first six games. He came back to score 21 points in a victory against Mercer last Friday. Freshman Anthony Cummings and redshirt freshman Marion Minifee were lost for the season with knee injuries. . . . Air Force (5-1) has won five straight. However, only two games have been against a Division I school — the same one. The Falcons split against rival service academy Navy. —ANDY KATZ

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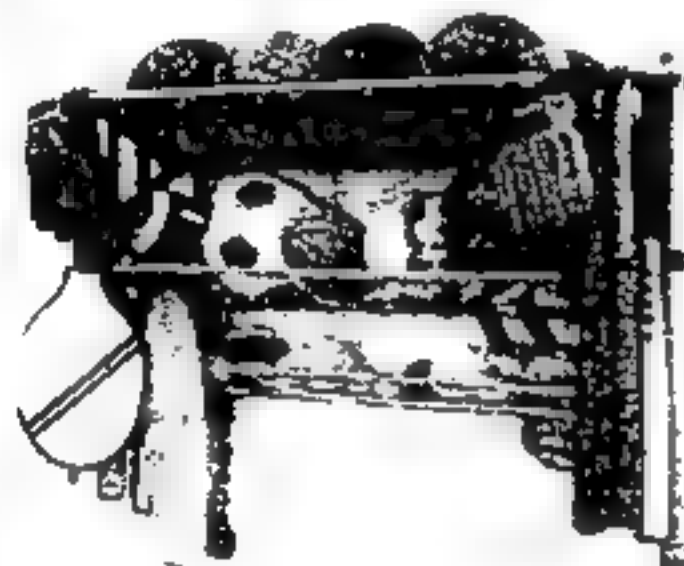
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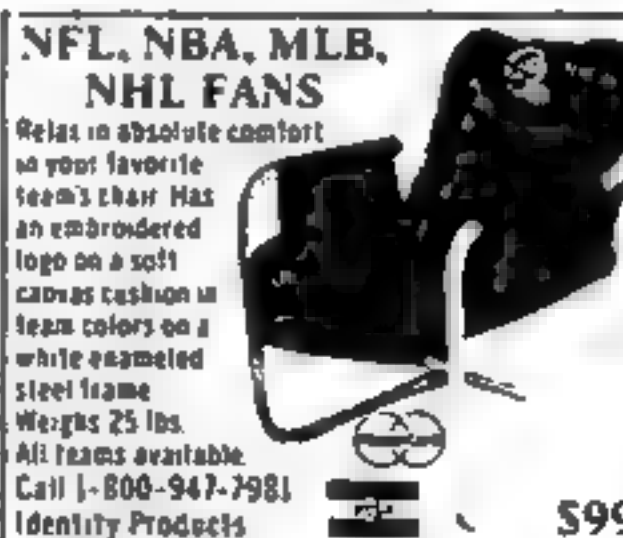
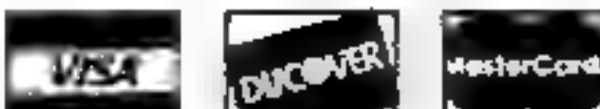
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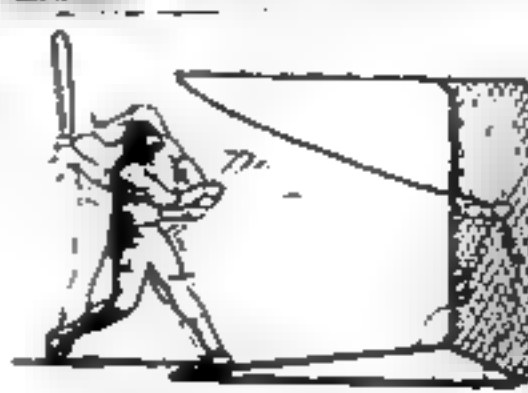
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COLLEGE FOOTBALL REPORT

Round-robin could knock Irish out of Big Ten nest



Ivan
MAISEL

The Big Ten Conference, in a meeting last week, considered three options for its future, the Chicago Tribune reported. The league will add one team, three teams or, most intriguing, stay put.

The latter is interesting because the league seriously is examining the institution of a round-robin schedule. That would mean 10 Big Ten games and one non-conference game.

The officials say such a schedule would help the gate — for instance, Purdue would have played Penn State this season instead of buying a game from Western Michigan. The round-robin also would quell complaints from the league coaches, who don't want the championship race affected by the whims of the schedule.

This season, league co-champ Wisconsin didn't play Penn State and Iowa, both bowl teams. Co-champ Ohio State missed Iowa and Minnesota, and third-place Penn State didn't play Purdue, 1-10.

Which team would be hurt the most by the proposed schedule? Notre Dame. Irish Athletic Director Dick Rosenthal has made a policy of scheduling Big Ten and Pacific 10 teams — this season, the Fighting Irish played six games against the two conferences. Rosenthal determined that playing Rose Bowl-bound, non-Coalition teams gives Notre Dame more flexibility January 1.

How many Big Ten teams, given only one non-conference game, are going to call South Bend? Michigan, maybe. We're still waiting for the others to step forward.

That's not to say that Notre Dame would have trouble scheduling. We can think of a certain Big East team in Dade County, Fla., that loves the Big Ten proposal. The Irish traditionally take their show everywhere. They will play at Washington in 1995, Texas in 1996 and Louisiana State in 1997.

Meanwhile, the Southeastern Conference coaches are whining to reduce their league schedules from eight games to seven. The SEC fans ought to whine at their schools. The league's non-conference schedule is laughable. Ticket buyers are seeing very few Top 25 teams from other areas.

Sam Houston State each year. He is a former assistant of Ken Hatfield, who is looking for work. If Rice Athletic Director Bobby May could coax Hatfield back to the SWC, it would be a shot in the arm for the league and the Owls. Hatfield has won everywhere he has coached.

But the SWC's two biggest stars are leaning toward spending their senior seasons in the NFL. Texas Tech running back Bam Morris, who broke Earl Campbell's SWC single-season rushing record, would rather face an eight-man line than another year of books. So much for the Doak Walker National Running Back Award committee's stressing academics in choosing its winner.

Texas A&M defensive tackle Sam Adams, a Lombardi Award finalist, will leave if he's a top-five pick. That's according to Sam Sr., the former Patriots star. Sam Jr. figures to go in the first half of the first round. But you can't make me believe he'll stay if he's told he'll be chosen 12th instead of fifth.

Hanging over everything is Texas A&M's pending case with the NCAA. The assumption is that the Aggies won't be allowed to make a fourth consecutive trip to the Cotton Bowl.

Happy new season

Georgia Coach Ray Goff has been as successful at keeping his talented juniors around for one more season as he has been at beating Florida. But Goff finally won one of the former battles last week. Quarterback Eric Zeier announced that he will return to Athens for his senior season, not that he's happy about it.

Zeier expressed wonder at the fact that the NFL considers him only a third- or fourth-round draft choice. His performance this season warranted more attention, especially considering that the NFL's snatching of



Aiming high: Smith says Missouri's situation is not hopeless.

Garrison Hearst and Andre Hastings last year left Zeier as the only star of the show. He threw for 3,525 yards and 24 touchdowns for the Bulldogs (5-6).

The NFL scouts question Zeier's size — he isn't 6 feet 2 — and the oomph in his arm. But he riddled every defense he faced. While it can't hurt Zeier to get a year bigger and smarter, it must make him wonder what he has to do.

After a disappointing season, however, Goff needed some good news. There's no Christmas gift the coach could get that would compare.

Smith's on new turf

Missouri ignored the personality conflicts that led to Larry Smith's demise at Southern California and focused on his record. The Tigers hired a coach who took the Trojans to three Rose Bowls and revived moribund programs at Tulane and Arizona.

"It's always a lot tougher than you think it is," Smith says, "but 10 years of losing seasons is not that much to overcome. There's a lot of history at Missouri."

Some of it good, presumably. Smith wants to add to it, especially at Faurot Field, where he would prefer to make the Omniturf history, and before the scheduled switch in 1995.

"I know the players hate

it," Smith says. "I walked on it, and I didn't like it very much. Maybe I'm speaking out of place, but does anybody have some tractors or backhoes we can go out and dig that baby up?"

Smith's conservative style should wear well in the Midwest, much better than it did with laid-back Californians. Stay tuned — if Missouri jumps to the Big Ten, then Smith could challenge his old rival John Cooper of Ohio State to become the first man to coach on both sidelines at the Rose Bowl.

Extra points

The original Big Eight schedule had Nebraska going down to Miami and the Orange Bowl on December 26. But the players voted and requested to head south on December 22. The Cornhuskers wanted 10 days to get used to the weather and to practice on grass. They are not afforded that opportunity on the Lincoln tundra. ... There may be a question as to who will fill quarterback Charlie Ward's shoes next season — Danny Kanell or Thad Busby — but Florida State announced last week that no one will wear Ward's jersey, No. 17, again. That's a first in Tallahassee. ... Ward's teammate, junior cornerback Clifton Abraham, quashed rumors that he will come out for the NFL draft. ♦

Ivan Maisel covers college football for the Dallas Morning News.

Outta here:
The day Goldsmith decided to accept a job offer at Duke, the Blue Devils' gain was the SWC's loss.



A losing battle

While the Big Ten ponders going onward and upward, the Southwest Conference received grim news on several fronts.

Rice Coach Fred Goldsmith, one week after accepting a two-year contract extension through 1999, and four days after turning down yet another overture from Duke Athletic Director Tom Butters, changed his mind and left to coach the Blue Devils.

Goldsmith had rebuilt Rice into a respectable team. The Owls have gone 6-5 each of the past two seasons, albeit with a victory against I-AA

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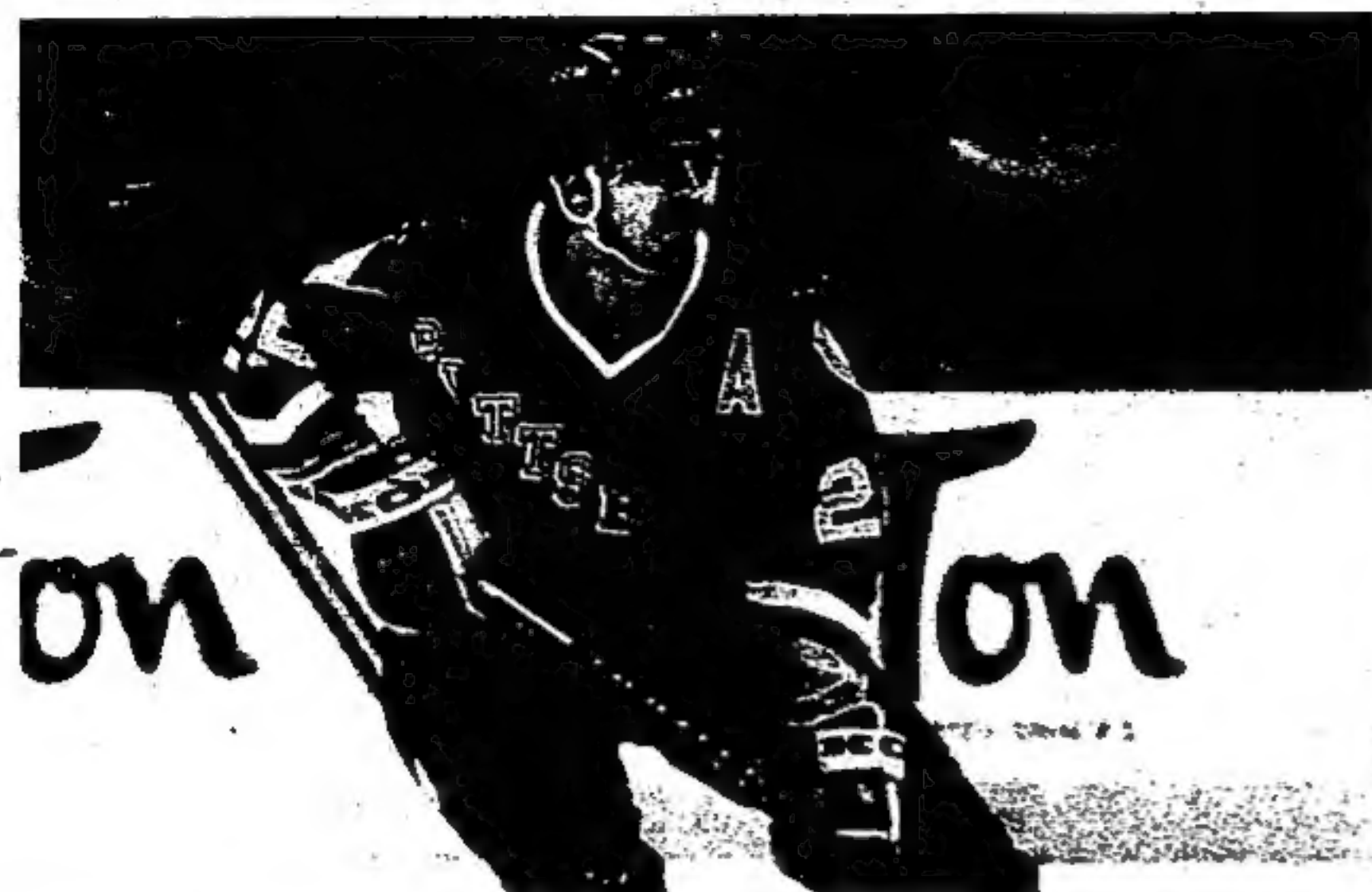
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NHL REPORT



Tough stuff: Stevens' remarkable comeback in so short a time proves his tenacity.

Even without Mario, Stevens is super, too



Larry WIGGE

I'll never forget the look on Kevin Stevens' face when I asked him if he had gotten off to a slow start because he still was reliving the bone-crunching collision he had with defenseman Richard Pilon in the Patrick Division finals last spring.

You remember the play. Stevens and Pilon went into the air and collided like two locomotives. Stevens fell face first to the ice, unconscious, and lay there in a pool of blood.

I started to duck, fearing Kevin thought I was questioning his manhood — even though nothing could be further from the truth. In my mind, Stevens is one of the toughest players in the NHL.

Forget that he didn't score a goal in his first six games this season. That the Penguins' left wing was playing five months after breaking his nose and shattering nearly all the bones in his forehead in Game 7 against the Islanders was a tribute to his toughness.

The collision comes to mind for two reasons. Last Sunday, Stevens faced the Islanders at Pittsburgh for the first time since the injury. More important, Stevens is proving that injury or not, Mario Lemieux or not, he still is the best left wing in the league.

"I don't remember much about it," Stevens says. "I've seen it on the news, and I don't like watching it. Actually, when I regained consciousness, I knew I had busted up my nose pretty good because of the blood. But the first time I had an idea that some-

thing was seriously wrong was when I tried to get up and couldn't. Then I saw them wheeling a stretcher onto the ice.

"Since the start of the season I've tried to put it behind me. Sure, I had a trial period where I had to make a hit and deliver one to know I was really back. But I can't go out there worrying about it. Physical play is what got me to the NHL. And to be effective I have to play it tough."

When Lemieux returned from a season-opening injury, he helped Stevens get out of his funk. But the six goals and two assists in four games was just a start for Stevens.

Since then, Stevens not only has answered critics about his rehabilitation but also has quieted those who maintain his All-Star status is only a byproduct of playing alongside Lemieux.

Critics point to Stevens' 41 goals and 46 assists in 48 games with Lemieux in the lineup last season, compared with 14 goals and 10 assists in 24 games without Mario. But it's only natural that the Penguins' attack sags without Lemieux — scoring 4.87 goals per game with him in the lineup and 3.13 without him.

All of that is history now that Stevens has 14 goals in his last 16 games — including at least one point in nine consecutive games — without Lemieux.

"When you can't play with the greatest player in the world, it's tough," Stevens says. "But I don't feel bad for me. I feel bad for Mario. He just wasn't ready to come back. He looks better now and when he comes back in January, he'll be the old Mario, not a flabby Mario."

And Stevens and the Penguins will prove again they are the best team in the NHL. "He makes me 10 times better than I am. We've had something good together," Stevens says. "But I still think I can score some goals without him."

Here's a tip. If you want to tell Kevin Stevens he isn't an All-Star without Lemieux at his side, take Evander Holyfield with you.

Bad argument

Believe it or not, there are those in St. Louis who claim All-Star defenseman Phil Housley was damaged goods when the Blues got him from Winnipeg for winger Nelson Emerson and defenseman Stephane Quintal and that the NHL should compensate the Blues now that Housley faces surgery January 4 to repair a herniated disk. Balderdash!

Toronto left wing Wendel Clark says St. Louis fans are lucky to have Housley.

"It was a steal to get Housley," he says. "It's unfortunate he can't play, but for anyone to say they would rather have Emerson and Quintal than Housley is preposterous. Just look at the Blues' record when he was in the lineup."

"I'd much rather face that team without Housley like we did in the playoffs last spring. When Phil was in their lineup, we had to key on him. Not many teams have a player who can turn a game around by himself like Housley can. The Blues are lucky to have him."

Housley wants Blues fans to know he is just as disappointed about the way things have turned out as they are.

"It's disappointing coming to a new team and having this happen when you want to prove yourself," says Housley, who had seven goals and four assists in 13 games and quarterbacked life into the Blues' non-existent transition game. "I would love nothing better than to help make up for this in the playoffs."

A big problem

Kings Coach Barry Melrose could not hold his tongue any longer after a 2-0 loss at Buffalo last Friday that dropped Los Angeles to 2-13-2 on the road.

"We've got to make some changes," he said. "This team can't win in the NHL. We're too small. We're playing against men who are 6-3, 6-4 and we are 5-11. I'm sure you took physics. When two things of different sizes meet, the bigger thing will win."

"I have to have a big, aggressive team that can run into people. And we just don't have that."

The bigness the Kings are missing is defenseman Marty McSorley. Period.

Tomas Sandstrom has been mentioned in trade rumors to New Jersey for defenseman Ken Daneyko and to the Islanders for de-



Second-guessing? Players still praise the Housley trade.

fenseman Uwe Krupp. And Jimmy Carson has been rumored headed to Vancouver for defenseman Dana Murzyn or Gerald Diduck. All of those defensemen have the size Melrose is looking for.

Icy bits

When Jets Coach John Paddock benched his top line — Alexei Zhamnov, Teemu Selanne and Keith Tkachuk — last Friday at Vancouver, it could have been the beginning of the end for Paddock, who has had trouble getting production from his European players this season. Andy Murray is Paddock's assistant and likely replacement. ... Boston is interested in Quebec defenseman Steve Duchesne — but not in a trade for defenseman Glen Wesley, who last week joined Bobby Orr and Ray Bourque as the only Bruins defensemen to score hat tricks. ... Rookie Derek Plante has taken advantage of the opportunity to play with Buffalo's Pat LaFontaine out of the lineup. The extra ice time likely will keep him from choosing to join the U.S. Olympic Team on January 1. ... Vancouver center Petr Nedved is on Hartford's and Tampa Bay's Christmas shopping lists. Paul



On the block: Sakic wants the Nordiques to trade him.

Holmgren has been pretty active since taking over as Whalers G.M. ... Selling more than 25 percent of the Kings to IDB Communications Group of Los Angeles gives Owner Bruce McNall the capital to build a new 20,000-seat arena complete with luxury boxes and the works.

Detroit Coach Scotty Bowman says he has to have his goaltenders' save percentage up to .900. But it won't get much higher than .869 with Tim Cheveldae and Chris Osgood in goal. ... Veteran San Jose center Igor Larionov was considered a bust in his first season with Vancouver several years ago. The Sharks, however, can't seem to win without him. Entering this week, they were 11-6-4 with him in the lineup and 0-12-1 without him. He currently is out with a sprained knee. ... The Blackhawks tried to get Hartford tough guy Jim McKenzie before he was traded to Florida for defenseman Alexander Godynyuk and then shipped to Dallas for a fourth-round draft choice. ... Quebec center Joe Sakic and Coach Pierre Page recently had a shouting match during a game. Now Sakic wants out. ... The Islanders can thank Hall of Fame defenseman Denis Potvin for embarrassing defenseman Darius Kasparaitis to play up to his rookie form from last season. Kasparaitis was honored before a game last week for his team-leading plus-15 rating last season. Kasparaitis was minus-12 before that game, and he collected his first assist of the season and helped the Islanders to a 4-1 victory over the Devils.

For updates on Larry Wigge's TSN Hockey Report, call 1-900-860-4400, 95 cents per call. Callers under 18 must have permission. The service is accessible from touchtone and rotary phones.

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The best bargain in hockey

The Red Wings are talking to center Sergei Fedorov about a new contract. And it's about time.

At \$295,000 per year, Fedorov easily ranks as the biggest bargain in the NHL. He enters the week second in scoring to Kings center Wayne Gretzky.

"I haven't been around the NHL very long, but I think Sergei Fedorov is just as important to the Red Wings as Mario Lemieux is to the Penguins and Wayne Gretzky is to the Kings," rookie goaltender Chris Osgood says. "Sergei's young, he's good defensively and he's a nightmare to stop on a breakaway."

"It's comforting to have a guy like that on your team. It's like having Cecil Fielder on your side, a guy who can hit a home run and win it for you in the ninth inning."

Salary figures released last week by the NHL Players Association show that Pittsburgh has the league's highest payroll at \$18.319 million, the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim the lowest at \$7.859 million. The Penguins' total would have surpassed \$20 million but Lemieux still is listed at \$3 million because his \$5-million per year contract had not been filed with the league office when the survey was being put together November 25.

There are 68 players making \$1 million or more, including six members of the Penguins and Kings.

The survey shows that Philadelphia's Eric Lindros and Montreal's Patrick Roy are the highest-paid players at \$3.5 million, followed by Detroit's Steve Yzerman at \$3.214 million and Gretzky and Lemieux at \$3 million. The league's \$2-million men are the Rangers' Mark Messier (\$2.533 million), Boston's Ray Bourque (\$2.5 million), the Islanders' Pierre Turgeon (\$2.35 million), Buffalo's Pat LaFontaine (\$2.217 million), St. Louis' Brett Hull and Quebec's Joe Sakic (\$2.2 million) and St. Louis' Phil Housley and Buffalo's Alexander Mogilny (\$2 million).

Some players, such as the Rangers' Brian Leetch, earn more as the result of bonuses and incentives. Leetch is the highest-paid defenseman, despite his listing at \$1.805 million.

The NHL's payroll totem pole (in millions):

Team	payroll	Team	payroll
Pittsburgh	\$18.319	Dallas	\$12.694
N.Y. Rangers	17.617	Boston	12.559
Los Angeles	16.208	Chicago	12.360
Buffalo	15.855	New Jersey	11.998
Calgary	15.705	Toronto	11.516
Detroit	15.103	Quebec	11.432
St. Louis	14.410	Winnipeg	11.024
Montreal	14.155	Tampa Bay	9.756
Washington	13.785	Edmonton	9.619
N.Y. Islanders	13.296	Ottawa	9.500
Hartford	13.005	Florida	8.759
Vancouver	12.896	San Jose	8.265
Philadelphia	12.755	Anaheim	7.859

Joining Fedorov on THE SPORTING NEWS' all-underpaid team are Winnipeg right wing Teemu Selanne (\$400,000), Boston left wing Joe Juneau (\$250,000), Los Angeles defenseman Alexei Zhitnik (\$400,000), Islanders defenseman Vladimir Malakhov (\$392,500) and Buffalo goalie Dominik Hasek (\$400,000).

The NHL's all-overpaid team: Los Angeles center Jimmy Carson (\$1 million), Rangers left wing Ed Olczyk (\$850,000), Washington right wing Kelly Miller (\$1.8 million), Hartford defenseman James Patrick (\$1.05 million), San Jose defenseman Mike Lalor (\$675,000) and Washington goalie Don Beaupre (\$925,000).

—LARRY WIGGE



Fedorov: The NHL's best bargain.

TSN POWER POLL

Team	W-L-T	Comment
1. Rangers	22-7-3	Gartner is 2 goals short of 600.
2. Maple Leafs	21-9-5	Borschevsky returns soon.
3. Penguins	16-8-7	7-1-4 in last 12 games.
4. Devils	18-10-4	Rookie goalie Brodeur is No. 1.
5. Flames	19-10-5	Stern provides lift with overtime goal.
6. Red Wings	17-13-2	Goaltending remains No. 1 concern.
7. Blackhawks	15-10-4	Ruutu scores goal in return.
8. Flyers	18-14-2	Renberg is not playing like a rookie.
9. Bruins	15-10-7	Wesley for Duchesne? Nah!
10. Canucks	17-15-0	Nedved trade could come this week.
11. Sabres	16-15-2	Plante settling in as No. 2 center.
12. Blues	16-11-5	Shanahan trade? Don't be silly.
13. Stars	15-12-7	McKenzie can punch, but he cannot score.
14. Canadiens	14-12-6	Five goals in eight games for Petrov.
15. Nordiques	13-14-5	Watch for Sakic-Page, round 2.
16. Capitals	14-16-2	17 goals in 2 games against Ottawa.
17. Panthers	12-14-5	Vanbiesbrouck vs. Richter this week.
18. Islanders	12-15-3	Hextall rebounds to 8-3-2.
19. Mighty Ducks	12-19-2	5-4 against Canadian teams.
20. Jets	12-18-5	Bench Selanne, Zhamnov and Tkachuk?
21. Sharks	11-18-5	Without Larionov, San Jose is lost.
22. Kings	11-19-2	Granato goes home with back problems.
23. Whalers	10-19-3	Godmyuk gets 3 assists in debut.
24. Lightning	10-19-3	A new building is in the works.
25. Oilers	8-21-5	Ranford is back in the groove.
26. Senators	7-23-3	Kudelski is still on the block?

Through Saturday's games.

THE SPORTING NEWS NHL Power Poll is determined by TSN Hockey Editor Larry Wigge.

ICE FOLLIES

Fighting words

NHL Vice President Brian Burke is on the right track. Noting a lack of respect among the players for one another, he already has issued 18 suspensions — four more than last season's record number.

Burke says there's more competitiveness among the players, which is the major reason for a 75 percent increase in fights. He points specifically to the new playoff format that no longer guarantees the top four teams in each division post-season berths.

"You have more games that have a direct impact on the playoffs," Burke says. "It used to be you had to be king of the hill in your division. Now, you have to be king of the mountain."

Getting on track

Eric Lindros always makes his presence felt in the Philadelphia lineup.

"Just because I've injured both my knees, I'm not going to change my game," Lindros says. "If somebody's on the tracks, they'll get hit by a train if they're in my way."

Two ways

Chicago Coach Darryl Sutter should take a closer look at the statistics before complaining that center Jeremy Roenick is not a good two-way player.

"Tell him to look at the plus-minus stats," Roenick says. "What does he want from me? I'm a plus-12 for the year and I was a plus-2 in the game he criticized me."

Maybe it's modern math Sutter doesn't understand.



Math whiz: Chicago's Roenick.

Moving out?

The inside back cover of the Oilers' media guide features an advertisement for a moving van company.

Edmonton fans could take that as an ominous sign that the Oilers will follow through with their much-discussed move to Minneapolis.

THE BOOK ON...



Randy Burridge LW, Capitals

Don't ever tell Randy Burridge that his performance is par for the course. That couldn't be further from the truth.

In September 1992, Burridge was finishing his fourth month of rehabilitation from reconstructive surgery on his left knee and dreaming about his return to the Capitals' lineup, months ahead of schedule. Burridge was walking down a hill during a round of golf when his right knee inexplicably buckled.

More surgery and, apparently, a wasted season. But Burridge listened patiently to pessimistic doctors, set his timetable and returned to play four games at the end of last year's regular season and four more in the playoffs.

This season, Burridge already has scored 12 goals.

"I think it's the story of the year in the NHL," Capitals Coach Terry Murray says. "To come back after two major knee reconstructions, and to show absolutely no effects, is a tremendous tribute to him."

Burridge, 27, is a medical marvel. Not only is he playing on borrowed time, but he also is playing on borrowed body parts.

Doctors told Burridge that they would need to transplant a tendon from his Achilles' tendon or patella when he tore the anterior cruciate ligaments in both his knees. Burridge, who was coming off a career-best 23-goal, 44-assist season in 1991-92, said no. He refused to trade his own body parts, borrowed a few, and now he's as good as new.

"I don't know where the Achilles' tendon they used on each of my knees came from," Burridge says. "I never really asked. All I know is that I didn't want anything taken out of my body."

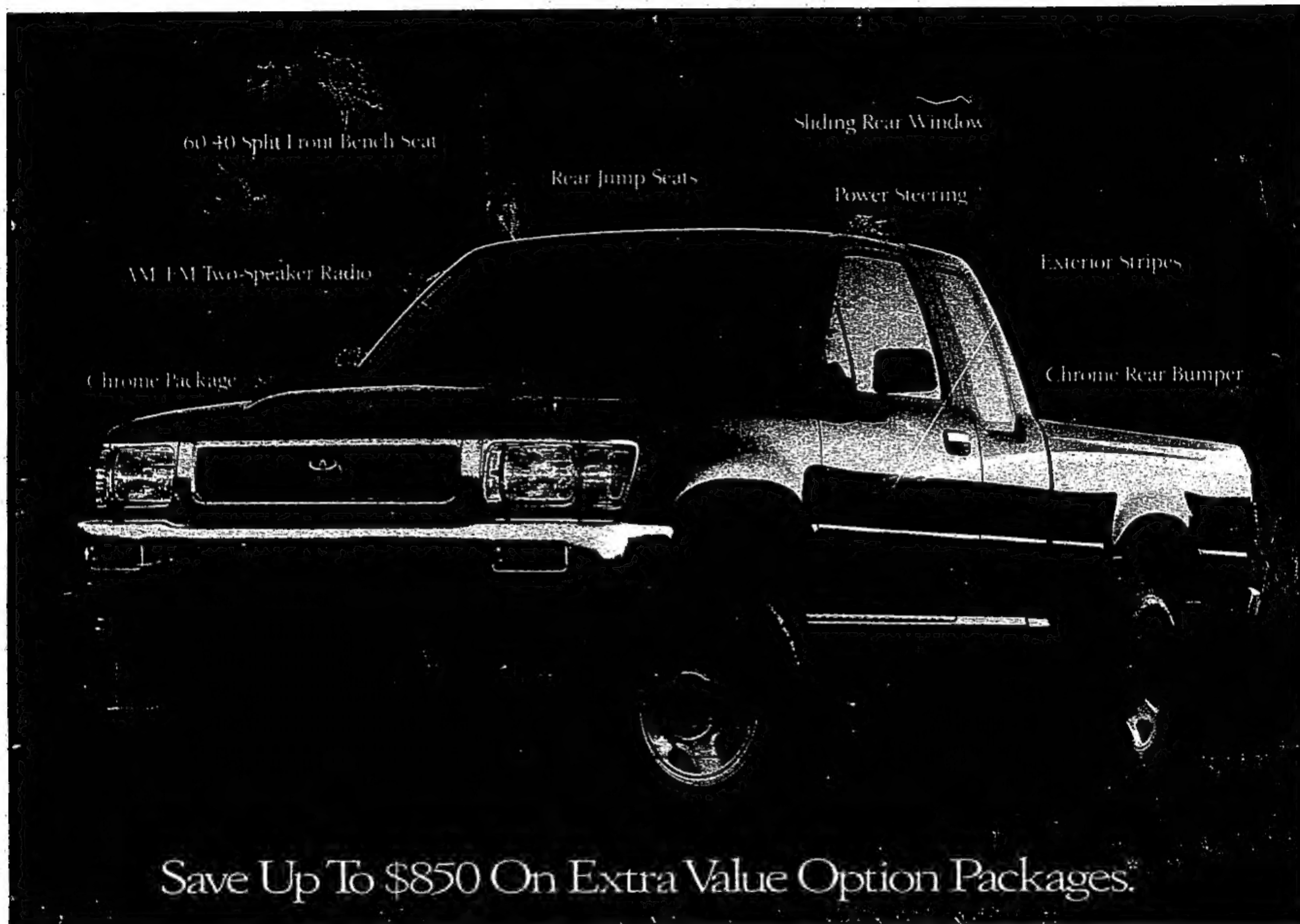
"I certainly am fortunate. Five or 10 years ago, you probably would have been done with this kind of injury. But I never thought my career was over. I felt confident I could come back and be at the top of my game."

When Burridge plays against the Bruins on January 2, most Boston fans will remember the hustling player who showed the old Boston Garden work ethic for six seasons in a Bruins uniform.

He may look like the same player on the surface, but that was before he became a modern-day \$6-million man.

—LARRY WIGGE

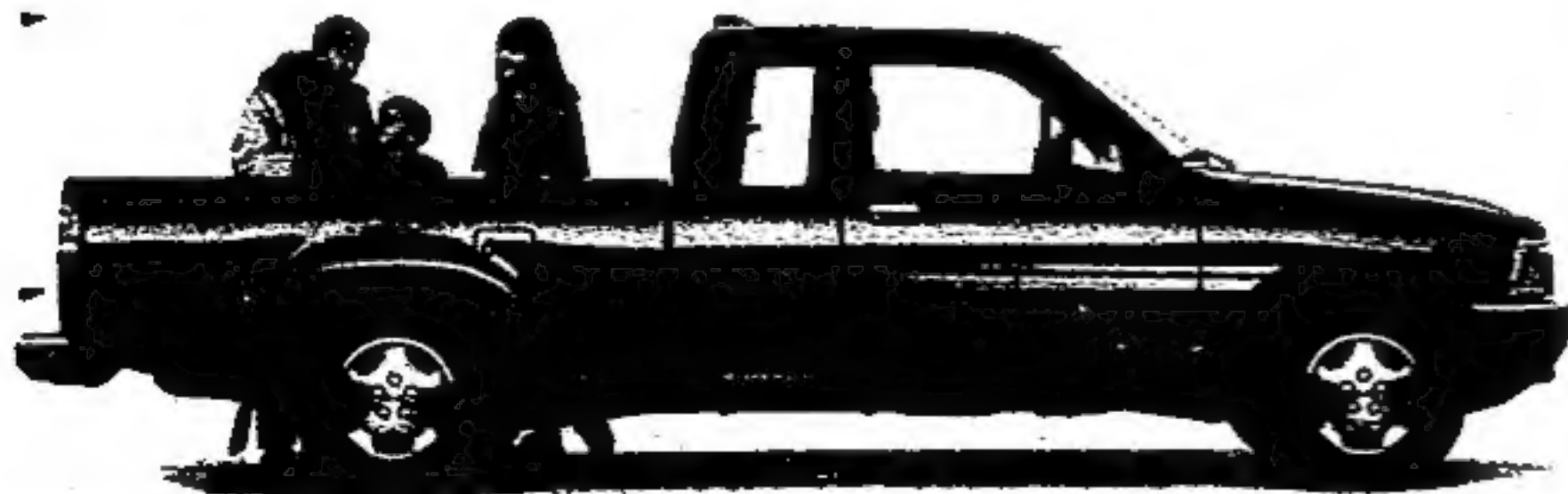
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